THE FORGOTTEN LOYALISTS:
UNIONISM IN ARKANSAS, 1861-1865

A Thesis

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By

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INTRODUCTION

During the Civil War, many border states had problems with the relative loyalties of their citizens. Confederate border states were particularly divided in sympathies. Typically, upland, non-slaveholding regions in these states remained firmly Unionist. This was true for most of the state of Arkansas, which seceded, as well. No state suffered more from the ravages of the war than Arkansas, due to the unorganized character of the conflict, and the divided loyalties in that area.\(^1\)

Because the Union effort enjoyed great popularity in parts of Arkansas, even though secessionist sympathies remained dominant, the Union government was presented with ample opportunities for mobilizing the loyal Arkansans. Generally, the Northern military authorities fared better in their attempts to enlist resident support to occupy the state than did their political counterparts. Because the area was denuded of scarce military resources early in the war, the Lincoln government surmised that it would be too expensive to reconstruct the state on a large scale during the war, and therefore relegated Arkansas
to a minor position in the war effort. Although the Northern armies retained a token presence in the state, this occupation did not serve any real military purpose except the protection of the Arkansas loyalists and the government they had constructed.

The responsibility of occupying large sections of Arkansas, and in maintaining order, fell upon the small number of Union soldiers assigned to the state after 1862. The majority of these Union soldiers were recruited in the state of Arkansas itself, after a interminable delay during which the relative merits of recruiting these men were debated by the Lincoln administration. There were still serious doubts as to whether these men could be trusted, but because of the relative shortage of manpower in that theater of operations, the local Union commanders approved the plan.

These Arkansas Federal troops, though never amounting to more than 8,000 in number, were able to secure most of the state and repel concentrated attempts by Confederate forces twice their number to retake Arkansas. If not for these loyalists, the state surely would have required the assignment of other Union troops from across the Mississippi River, thus hampering the Union war effort in those areas. The Union recruited many African-American troops in Arkansas, but these regiments were assigned generally to garrison duty east of the Mississippi River, and therefore will not be included in this study. However, for the purposes of this thesis, sections of southern Missouri will be included, for this is where many loyalist refugees fled, and
were subsequently recruited, after their fortunes in Arkansas turned for the worse in late 1861 and early 1862.

The Arkansas Federals performed two military functions for the Union. They served in a conventional capacity, fighting in several battles and smaller engagements. They also served in an unconventional capacity, in combatting the irregular Confederate forces that remained in the state even after most Southern regiments had been defeated or reassigned. These Confederate forces can be divided into two categories. Guerrillas, or "partisans", in Civil War terminology, were usually under the command of someone sanctioned by the Confederate government. This leader usually followed orders given by a superior officer at regular intervals, in other words, working within the Confederate war effort. Bushwackers were also sometimes commanded by a Confederate officer (or ex-officer), but these bands of men did not take orders from legitimate military leaders, and used violence to achieve personal gratification in perpetrating murder, and pillage against unprotected and isolated settlers in the state. For the purposes of this study these definitions shall apply to Confederate irregular forces.³

For the most part, Arkansas Federals were fairly successful when it came to policing areas against Confederate irregular activity. They successfully captured or killed many of the leaders of several outlaw bands in Arkansas, and even many of the local Southern sympathizers were relieved when loyalists came into an area to combat these irregular forces, because they helped to reinstate law and order. However, the Arkansas Federals were not as successful on the
battlefield. Even though they scored a few small victories, in most of
the larger engagements the Arkansas Federal troops met with dismal
failure. This can be attributed to several reasons. The Arkansas
loyalists received little training, and they were never subjected to a
great deal of discipline, unlike many of their Northern counterparts.
These deficiencies showed on the battlefield.4

The Union authorities did not make good use of the opportunities
presented to them in the first years of the war in Arkansas. Loyalists
within the state were not well supplied or trained. Correspondingly,
the expectations placed on them by the Union commanders were minor. If
a significant investment had been made earlier in the war, in terms of
arms and experienced officers to train the loyalists, then Arkansas
troops could have been used much earlier in holding conquered areas,
instead of finally reaching that status in the middle of 1864. This
deployment of Unionists was successful eventually, but the troops still
had to contend with prejudices and misgivings from many Union
commanders, and Arkansans were usually relegated to the lowest priority
in the Union supply effort. The early history of the Arkansas Federal
troops is one of gross mismanagement and lost opportunities. When the
Union began to reconstruct a state government friendly to their
interests in Arkansas, military arrangements were also made to use
Arkansas troops in a local defense capacity. The last years of the war
in Arkansas saw the ability of resourceful local commanders to rise
above the restrictions that were imposed by the Union authorities.
Chapter One will begin with an examination of the process of secession in Arkansas and the events in the northern part of the state prior to the battle of Pea Ridge. Chapter Two will cover the crucial period between the battles of Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove, which was the turning point for Union fortunes in the state. Chapter Three will look at the various Union movements in the state during the year 1863, and will cover some of the continued recruiting efforts by the Union in Arkansas. Chapter Four will examine the creation of the Unionist state government under Isaac Murphy in 1864, and the increased Union propaganda efforts to sway Arkansans to the side of the North. Finally, Chapter Five will detail the activities of the Union troops in the northern and western parts of the state in dealing with guerrillas and bushwackers, and also will look at efforts to protect the loyal civilian populace from outlaw depredations.
FOOTNOTES


2A.W. Bishop, Report of the Adjutant General of Arkansas, Reports for the Period of the later rebellion and to November 1, 1866, (Little Rock, 1866), 256. Bishop actually estimated the number of Arkansas that served in the Union forces at 8,789 men, but this number does not include African-Americans.

3Huff, "Guerrillas in Arkansas", 127-131. Jayhawkers were generally Union irregular forces or outlaw bands of deserters. Southerners occasionally referred to Union regular forces as Jayhawkers, but this was not always the case. Bushwackers were generally Southern in loyalty, and both sides used this term to describe Confederate outlaw bands in Arkansas. While guerrillas did not always have negative reputations surrounding their operations, bushwackers almost always did. There were no officially sanctioned Union guerrilla forces in Arkansas, so the term guerrilla will apply exclusively to Confederate forces.

4Conversely, the lack of discipline among Arkansas Federal units did not hamper their anti-guerrilla operations. These activities called for small units of men led by officers with a high degree of initiative and freedom of movement in pursuing outlaw bands to their mountain hiding places. Enlisted men needed endurance as well as intimate knowledge of the terrain in which operations took place, not proficiency in battlefield drill. The Arkansas Federals were well qualified in these areas.
CHAPTER I

Secession and the "Tug of War"

Arkansas in the 1860's could be divided geographically into two distinct areas that differed greatly in many ways. The uplands consisted primarily of the Ozark and Ouachita mountains, and this area bordered Missouri and Oklahoma. The lowlands stretched across the southeast half of the state, and included the Mississippi flood plain and Gulf Coastal Plain, both of which contained rich alluvial soil suitable for plantation-style agriculture. Little Rock was the capital and was situated almost at the border of these two physiographic regions, in the center of the state.

The uplands had been settled early in the state's history by people coming from the upper South and lower North. Tennessee and Missouri sent sizeable contingents of settlers in the 1850's, as well as Illinois. In fact, among the Arkansas Ozarks population in 1860, fully 70% were from the three states mentioned above. The plains and delta region of Arkansas were settled in the 1830's and 1840's by slaveholders from the Deep South, following the cotton frontier as it crossed the Mississippi River. The soil of the lowlands made it an
ideal place for cotton agriculture, but the uplands remained an area 
where only small landholders could rely on subsistence agriculture as a 
lifestyle. Among the states which eventually seceded from the Union, 
Arkansas had the lowest percent of slave population, at 17.7%. The 
poor, non-slaveholding farmers in the uplands drastically affected this 
total. This difference in settlement affected the political landscape 
of Arkansas as well.

The state had been run in the 1850's by the Johnson family, a 
political dynasty which controlled the Governor's seat in Little Rock 
for over a decade. A successful challenge was made by Thomas Hindman, 
later to become a Confederate general, in 1860. Arkansas was staunchly 
Democratic, but had a strong Whig minority in the 1850's. This Whig 
faction voted for Bell's Constitutional Union Party in 1860, but the 
majority of the state voted for John Breckinridge, who represented the 
Southern Democrats. While no votes were polled for Lincoln in any part 
of the state, Bell's share of the vote, especially from Northern 
Arkansas, could be interpreted as a strong desire to stay in the 
Union.  

Following Lincoln's victory in November of 1860, there was little 
commotion in Arkansas. Despite their close economic ties to the Deep 
South, the ruling elites in the state saw no reason to secede because 
of a Republican victory. Even the hard core of Breckinridge supporters 
called for impeachment, not secession, if Lincoln interfered with 
slavery. In the months following Lincoln's election, affairs
proceeded at a normal pace in the state, even as many other Deep South states were seceding. However, pro-secessionist Henry Rector was sworn in as Governor in December. Also, a secessionist candidate was the winner of the Senate race, Dr. Charles Mitchel. By this point, the Johnson family had allied itself with Hindman and his supporters in backing secession, and Rector and Mitchel added their political clout to the issue. It seemed as if the secessionists were gaining an unstoppable momentum.

In the midst of the secession of South Carolina, on December 20th, 1860, the Union supporters in Arkansas rallied. Petitions began trickling in from the western and northern parts of the state, an assertion from Fort Smith speaking for the minds of many, saying: "people here are for the Union as it is". A large Union rally was held in Fayetteville, which even the secessionist press credited with a large and enthusiastic turnout. But the secession of South Carolina and other states bolstered the Arkansas disunionists, which were able to arrange an election for February 18th, in which delegates would be selected for a convention to decide the issue. Rector was busy purchasing arms for the Arkansas militia, for the defense of the slaveholding cause. However, the governor shrugged off questions from Unionists about the weapons purchases, explaining that the militia would be used to check lawlessness on the western border with the Indian Territory.

In the uplands, there were a few slaveholders who attempted to further the cause of secessionism, but poor, white farmers in the hill
country did not feel threatened by Lincoln and the Republicans. However, the upland farmers were not abolitionists. They simply did not feel a strong desire to defend the institution, and secession was certainly not their desired course of action. The upland population generally despised the slaveholding planters of the delta. They saw the secession movement as a plot designed to deprive them of the right to vote, and the Unionist candidates from the area played on this theme. They also stressed the fact that secession would require removal of the Federal troops stationed at Fort Smith, which helped stifle the prevailing lawlessness in the western counties. There was no guarantee that lawlessness would spread if the garrison was pulled out, but the Union candidates raised the spectre of Indian attacks across the border against helpless Arkansas farmers, in order to further their own political aims.  

A major incident threatened when the previously unoccupied arsenal in Little Rock was garrisoned in early January by 65 men from the U.S. 2nd Artillery regiment. Home guard meetings in the delta urged Rector to take the arsenal by force in January, but he resisted, saying that the state had not yet seceded, and such action would be improper. Armed men flocked to the capital anyway, and the sight of the militia units roaming the streets of the capital made both the citizens and the Federals at the armory nervous. Finally, on February 9, the commander of the detachment surrendered, upon guarantee of safe passage to St. Louis, after he had heard no word from Washington and the armory had been surrounded by hundreds of pro-secession militia.
The conflict over control of the armory gave Unionists plenty of ammunition to fight the secessionists with. Many moderates believed that Rector had handled the whole situation badly, and even secessionists began to distance themselves from the governor. There was also cheering news for the Unionists from Tennessee. The people of that state had refused to call a convention on the issue of secession. Also, Virginia sponsored a peace conference on February 4. However, secessionists countered that the state's economic lifeline, the Mississippi River, could be cut if Arkansas did not accompany its sister Southern states in seceding.

On February 18th, the election was held. Arkansans voted overwhelmingly in favor of holding a convention to discuss the issue. But most distressing to the secessionists, Unionist candidates won approximately 57% of the votes in the election. Unionists carried almost every county in the northern and western parts of the state, as well as Pulaski county, home of Little Rock. Rallies and celebrations were held across the Unionist parts of Arkansas, in celebration of the victory that had been won. But the election was not so much a victory for Unionism as it was an indication that many voters were still ambiguous about secession, at least until Lincoln did something to provoke it. Arkansans still left themselves open to the possibility of secession. If a peace conference in Washington had produced a solution, then Unionism in Arkansas would have prevailed. But because no compromise was forthcoming, Arkansas' ties to the South were too strong to ignore. The Unionists misinterpreted the victory, yet remained confident as they assembled for the convention on March 4, 1861, the same day that Lincoln took office.
In the convention that met in Little Rock, the assembly had a decidedly pro-Union cast, at least in the early stages. Lincoln’s inaugural speech had been conciliatory, which helped the Unionists in Arkansas. Fifty-one of the seventy-seven members of the convention were from the upper South states of Tennessee, Kentucky and North Carolina. This was important, for these men were more likely to follow the lead of these states, none of which had seceded as of March 4. A Union-cooperationist party formed across old party lines and commanded a slim five vote majority at the convention. The Unionists made good use of their advantage, electing Unionist David Walker of Fayetteville as President of the convention, and defeating a motion to draw up an ordinance of secession on the first day of business. In the days following these Union successes, filibustering was used to slow the secessionists, and drag out the debate on the issue. Several motions favorable to the secessionists were sent to die in the committees, which were controlled by the slim Union majorities.

The secessionist delegates became frustrated at the Unionists’ ability to block their political moves. On March 13, they tried in a series of proposals to throw the issue back to the voters for a decision. This idea was rejected by the Unionists, on the grounds that a vote had just been taken only a month before, and the idea had been defeated at that date. Nevertheless, the proposal was only narrowly defeated, by a three-vote margin. Finally, a proposal was passed, with the support of a significant part of the Unionist majority, to offer the issue to the voters once again, but not until August, after a
border state convention had been held in Kentucky. This proposal
gained Unionist support where others had failed because the
secessionists from southern and eastern parts of Arkansas threatened to
break away from the state to protect their own interests. A division
along the Arkansas River was touted openly in some secessionist
newspapers, and Unionists came to an agreement with their opponents
after these threats were bandied about.\textsuperscript{11} The convention ended on
March 21, and Unionists placed their faith in Walker’s ability to
resist secessionist calls for a new convention before August.\textsuperscript{12}

However, a dangerous distinction had been made at the convention.
Many Unionists professed optimism that a peaceful settlement would be
arrived at. Many more felt that if a solution could not be found, and
the Federal government used force to coerce the Southern states to come
back, then the Union cause in Arkansas was lost. The majority of
Arkansans, including many of those elected as Unionists to the
convention, were conditional Unionists. They placed a strong belief in
state’s rights, and were more opposed to coercion to secession. Only
those who resided in the Ozark region of Arkansas remained
unconditionally Unionist. Even there, in the northern and western
parts of the state, these Unionists had to keep their views to
themselves, in fear of being proclaimed abolitionists. In truth, these
people had never trusted the planter class which had run the state from
Little Rock, and were more interested in their voting rights, not
slavery.\textsuperscript{13}
When Lincoln decided to use force in bringing the Southern states back into the Union, the support for secession in Arkansas swung sharply against the North. Walker came under intense pressure to call another convention, with renewed threats of splitting the state coming from the secessionists. Rector made arrangements for seizing the other Federal outposts in the state, even before Arkansas had seceded. Walker saw Federal troops abandon Fort Smith, taking with them many arms and ammunition. Finally, Virginia left the Union on April 17th.\textsuperscript{14} Rector had turned down Lincoln’s request for troops, and replied to Jefferson Davis’ request by delaying, until the state had formally seceded. Walker acquiesced, calling the convention reluctantly for May 6th.

The secessionists wasted no time in getting a motion passed for a ordinance of secession to be written that afternoon. A last ditch effort by Alfred Dinsmore of Benton county (in the northwest part of the state), which called for an election to be held in June, was defeated fifty-five to fifteen, with all of the supporting votes coming from the north and west of Arkansas.\textsuperscript{15} A lull followed over some technicalities in the ordinance, then a vote was called. Sixty-five delegates approved, five did not. Of the five, four were from Northwest Arkansas.\textsuperscript{16} Fort Sumter had truly decimated the Unionist majority.

Walker then addressed the convention, calling for each of the five dissenters to change their votes so that Arkansas could present a unified front against coercion from the North. Four of the delegates changed their vote. Only Isaac Murphy, a hill farmer from Huntsville
in the Northwest, remained unshakeable. Amid the chorus of boos and hisses, he exclaimed, "I have cast my vote after mature reflection, and have duly considered the consequences, and I cannot conscientiously change it. I therefore vote no!" Murphy was not a man who lacked conviction. He continued to participate in the convention, even after receiving several death threats, and he concluded his business in Little Rock and retired to Huntsville, without being molested. Murphy's objection went unheeded by Hindman, who wired Jefferson Davis that the convention had passed the secession ordinance by a unanimous vote.

The convention continued with other important business after secession had been approved. They selected generals to lead the militia, over which the convention had assumed control. They also reduced the governor's term from four to two years. The old Johnson family dynasty was able to align itself with the ex-Unionists, and prevent Hindman's bid for a seat in the Confederate Congress. Significantly, four of the five men sent to Montgomery were ex-Unionists. Secessionists grumbled at Hindman's loss, as did Rector, but the ex-Unionists were determined that secession would not erupt into revolution, and they began to take many steps to gather power into their hands, as new political alliances began to form in Arkansas. This new alliance of ex-Unionists and the Johnson family dynasty survived the Civil War and resurfaced after Reconstruction to lead the state into the early 1900's.

Many of the Ozark Unionist delegates had to answer to angry constituents after returning from the convention. Murphy, however, was
hailed as a hero in Huntsville, and while there were still occasional threats on his life, a group of men volunteered from the town to protect his house at all hours. Peace societies began to start up in the north and west. In the north-central part of the state, the Arkansas Peace Society was discovered by Confederate authorities and its members were taken to Little Rock for trial. They were given a choice between being shot for treason or joining the Confederate forces. They chose the Confederate army.  

David Walker also led a small number of Unionists in northern Arkansas in joining the Confederate army. Many men felt they had no choice, but some honestly felt that since the state had seceded, they should defend it and not the Unionist principles they felt so strongly about. There were a few notable exceptions. Judge Jonas Tebbetts of Fayetteville brought his family into his house, closed all the windows, made them salute the flag of the United States and then read from the Declaration of Independence, saying that the Union government was the only one that they were subject to. Indeed, Fayetteville vied with Fort Smith as the major haven for Unionist activity throughout the war, but Fayetteville attained military, as well as symbolic importance, since it was the largest town in Northwest Arkansas at the time and was looked to as a center of learning, even above Little Rock, because there were two colleges there before the war. 

Confederate companies were raised successfully, however, in Northern Arkansas, and Fayetteville itself raised two regiments, one led by Walker. Yet, a substantial portion of the Ozarks population remained unconvinced. By late June, 1861, Confederate forces had made
Fayetteville a supply center to be used for an advance into Missouri. Sterling Price and his Missouri state militia waited in Springfield for a combined force of Arkansans and Texans under Ben McCulloch to come up and unite into one army, which it was hoped would sweep to St. Louis. Many Unionists awaited anxiously the outcome of this campaign.\textsuperscript{23} Nathaniel Lyon, leader of Union forces in Missouri, was able to force Price out of Springfield, and into the extreme southwest corner of the state. Price joined with McCulloch, however, and in a surprise attack on August 10, 1861, the Confederates defeated Lyon's force at Wilson's Creek, and killed Lyon himself. The Union force retreated in disorder toward Rolla, Missouri, and the Confederates headed north.\textsuperscript{24}

McCulloch refused to take his force farther north than Springfield, so Price went on his own accord to Lexington, Missouri, which he successfully besieged for nine days, beginning on September 12. Price was able to capture many supplies in this victory as well, which were badly needed by the Confederates. After Lexington fell, winter was settling in, and a new force assembled at Rolla under General John C. Fremont, with designs to retake Springfield. Price continued to recruit while in northern and western Missouri, and Unionists in Arkansas despaired that they would permanently be subject to the Confederates.

Fremont made a proclamation freeing the slaves in Missouri, as well as threatening to shoot Southern sympathizers who were not in uniform. Lincoln had to revoke most of the proclamation, and worked to remove Fremont from command.\textsuperscript{25} In late November, Lincoln replaced him with Henry Halleck. Fremont had injured the Union cause, by driving
moderates in southern Missouri to the side of the Confederates. Halleck put Samuel R. Curtis in charge of the district of Southwest Missouri, and scuttled back to St. Louis to deal with other problems, namely a restless frontier plagued by guerrilla and Indian attacks. Curtis waited for the winter to play itself out, and was content to send patrols to the Arkansas border. He knew that McCulloch would not cross the state line, and Price alone was no match for the forces Curtis commanded in Springfield.\textsuperscript{26}

When winter ended, and the muddy cartpaths of the Ozarks cleared enough for campaigning, Curtis started his army in motion. Unionists in Arkansas had their hopes renewed, after the debacles of 1861. A brigade of Union troops entered Fayetteville on February 23rd, as the Confederates under Price retreated into the Boston Mountains, south of town. Curtis proclaimed to Halleck that, "I am now master of all of their strongholds and larger cities of Western Arkansas."\textsuperscript{27} McCulloch was at Fort Smith, fifty miles away from Fayetteville, gathering forage for his cavalry. He soon united with Price, and the presumptuous Curtis was driven out of Fayetteville, by an army under the overall command of General Earl Van Dorn. By this time, the Unionists were becoming rather anxious. Many had openly displayed Federal sympathies when Union soldiers had come into town, and now that Confederates reoccupied the area, they were being informed upon by their neighbors. One of Curtis' subordinate generals expressed concern for their plight when entering Fayetteville, telling his superior that, "If [the Union troops are] ordered to leave, all of the loyal people will have to leave with us."\textsuperscript{28}
A portion of the Unionist population fled to Curtis' lines for protection when he entered Arkansas. Some of the Arkansas men wanted to join his army. Curtis had no authority to enlist these men into a separate regiment, but he allowed some to stay in Cassville, on the southwest border of Missouri, while he was campaigning. Most Ozark Unionists stayed at their homes, awaiting the outcome of the campaign. Word reached Fayetteville that the Union had been victorious in two days of fighting, on March 6th and 7th at Pea Ridge, from Confederate stragglers retreating from the battle. In fact, the Southern army fell apart, and Van Dorn retreated headlong to Fort Smith, and beyond. McCulloch had been killed.\(^{29}\)

A dangerous precedent was set after Pea Ridge. Many Confederates chose not to return to their units, and a large portion of them slunk away during the campaign. A few days after Pea Ridge, a Rebel force numbering over a thousand men was lurking outside Fayetteville, occasionally raiding into the city for supplies. The main part of Van Dorn's army had already retreated into the Boston Mountains. Many men split from the Fayetteville deserters and decided to form guerrilla bands, usually coalescing around a captain who also had deserted.\(^{30}\) Dozens of these bands spread out into the Arkansas countryside, and most numbered no more than 50 men. Some moved into small hamlets where they could base their activities from, while others positioned themselves across the main Union supply route running from Cassville to Fayetteville. When wagon trains ran down the line, they had to be heavily guarded, for some Confederate forces attacked with up to 500 men against the trains.\(^{31}\)
The situation did not noticeably improve for Unionists after the battle. True, the Confederate army had been forced out of the Union stronghold in Northwest Arkansas, but there were hundreds of guerrillas running loose in the area, committing depredations against loyal families. Curtis was concerned about Union families, but his biggest problem was Van Dorn's army, still lurking in the Boston Mountains. He preferred to chase the remnants of Van Dorn's army to Fort Smith and force it to fight a battle. Only after this failed, did he then turn his full attention to the complaints of the Unionists of Northern Arkansas. While Curtis was continuing his campaign against the Confederate army, the Unionists began wonder what actions they could take to insure their safety. It was still early in the war, yet they had already received a taste of the unpredictable, see-saw nature of the conflict in Arkansas. Many prudent Union men decided to keep their sympathies silent, until it was certain that Curtis and his men were there to stay in Northwest Arkansas.
FOOTNOTES


4Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, January 5, 1861: p. 3.


9Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, March 9, 1861, p. 2.


Report of Sturgis, May 21, 1861, O.R., Series I, Volume 1, pp. 650-651; Wolfe to Stanton, February 22, 1861, O.R., pp. 655-656; Townsend to Stanton, March 27, 1861, O.R., p. 659. There was some discussion between Winfield Scott and Lincoln in February about pulling the troops out. The Unionists in Fort Smith were displeased, and presented Lincoln with a petition asking for the troops to stay. Scott then ordered the men to stay at Fort Smith until Arkansas made an overt attempt at seceding.

Bishop, Loyalty, pp. 23-24; Woods, Rebellion, p. 159.

Ibid., p. 159; Bishop, Loyalty, p. 24.


Hindman to Davis, May 6, 1861, O.R., Series I, Volume I, p. 690.


Georgia L. Tatum, Disloyalty in the Confederacy (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934), pp. 9, 24-25, 36-40. In accordance with taking the pledge to join the society, members were bound to join the Union army at the earliest possible opportunity.

William S. Campbell, One Hundred Years of Fayetteville (Fayetteville: Washington County Historical Society, 1977), pp. 89, 90.

William Baxter, Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove, or, Scenes and Incidents of the War in Arkansas (Cincinnati, 1864), pp. 1-20.

Campbell, One Hundred Years of Fayetteville, p. 45; McCulloch to Walker, June 14, 1861, O.R., Series I, Volume 3, pp. 594-505.


Lincoln to Hunter, October 24, 1861, O.R., Series I, Volume 3, p. 554; Fremont's Farewell Address, November 2, 1861, O.R., Volume 3, p. 560.


28 Report to Asboth, February 23, 1862, O.R., Series I, Volume 8, p. 70. Curtis expressed some concern for Unionists in his orders to the men guarding Fayetteville, but largely this concern was limited to protection of private property. Curtis did not want to alienate any potential allies he might encounter in Arkansas.


30 Baxter, Sketches and Incidents, pp. 140-141, 153-154.

31 Report of Wright, February 27, 1862, O.R., Series I, Volume 8, p. 74; Bishop, Loyalty, pp. 12-13. Keitsville, in Barry County, Missouri, was astride the supply route to Springfield. Bishop wrote, "[it] has been noted since the origin of our national troubles as a rendezvous for marauders of the worst description." A Union supply train was bushwacked by over 500 Texas Rangers on February 26 coming from Keitsville, with some loss of life.
CHAPTER II

"Weary and Sore, But Firm of Purpose"

After General Samuel Curtis and the Army of the Southwest won the battle of Pea Ridge, Union men began to believe that some of their doubts had been laid to rest concerning the support that they were going to receive from the Union authorities. However, much of this support did not materialize, at a time when it was desperately needed to bolster Unionism in Arkansas. For the rest of 1862, the Union military authorities largely went ignorant of the possibilities that Arkansas Unionists offered, or they chose to place military efforts in activities outside the Trans-Mississippi theater of operations, which alienated Unionists in Arkansas even more. It is indicative of the chaotic and violent situation in northern Arkansas that the Unionist support remained intact throughout this period, despite Union disinterest and in some cases, hostility. The Arkansas loyalists had nowhere else to turn for safety but Union authorities, no matter how indifferent these authorities were about providing protection.

Immediately following the battle of Pea Ridge, Jefferson Davis ordered Generals Earl Van Dorn and Sterling Price to bring their troops
across the Mississippi River to participate in the defense of that region. Curtis soon learned of the Confederate movements, and contemplated such a move for his own army. He planned for a drive on Little Rock, which was seconded loudly by most of the Unionists in Arkansas. With most Southern resistance eliminated by the rebels’ eastward redeployment, Curtis had an open route to the capital, or so it seemed.¹

By early April, the constant operations of two medium sized armies in northwest Arkansas had denuded the region of food and forage for horses. Curtis could not sustain himself in the area, and he could not go southward to Fort Smith, for his supply lines would be too extended. However, Arkansas Unionists wanted him to leave a force behind to protect them from the marauding bands of bushwackers that were beginning to ravage the area. Curtis’ ultimate solution to the supply problem only created more headaches for the Army of the Southwest.

Curtis formulated a plan to pull back to Forsyth, Missouri, on the far southern border of that state, to resupply his army and rest them for a few weeks. He then would move down the valley of the White River, which runs through the north-central part of the state, and deviate from it when approaching Little Rock, about 50 miles away from the river.² Henry W. Halleck, Curtis’ superior, felt the plan might succeed only if Union supply vessels were able to ascend the White River in order to succor the army if the drive stalled. But Halleck also had
other, more pressing military concerns. By mid-April, he had assumed control of the Union forces in western Tennessee, following the battle of Shiloh. He did not have as much time to attend to Curtis’ operations, and it is possible that he approved the plan without serious thought.³

Curtis began moving his forces to the northeast on April 4th. He did not feel that Northwest Arkansas could be held, because of the tenuous supply situation, so he designated Cassville as the southernmost point of Union occupation in the area. Unionists in Arkansas complained loudly, and many packed their belongings and fled with their families when Curtis left. These Union men appeared singly or in small groups in Springfield after Curtis left the area. Many had harrowing escape stories to tell, since guerrillas prowled all of the roads leading north into Missouri.⁴ Some men were murdered trying to go north, and others turned back in fear. Those that made the journey safely were allowed to enter some Missouri Union regiments that were recruiting in the area. Before Curtis left the area, he gave Major M. LaRue Harrison of the Thirty-Sixth Illinois Infantry permission to recruit Arkansas refugees who were arriving at Cassville. He was allowed to recruit enough men to fill a company of men, who would then be mustered in with the Sixth Missouri Provisional Militia at Forsyth.⁵

Harrison soon became the organizer of the Unionists in northwest Arkansas. He was an able and tireless recruiter, and he was able to assemble many more men than were needed for a squadron. He moved his new company to Forsyth, in order to join with the rest of the Sixth
Missouri, when word reached him that nearly a hundred more men were coming from Arkansas to join Harrison’s outfit once they had heard that one was forming. Harrison then asked John S. Phelps, Union military governor of Arkansas, if he might intercede in the Arkansans’ behalf in Washington and ask for permission to raise a full regiment of cavalry, to be composed entirely of Arkansas men. The regiment was to be assembled at Springfield, where it would be given provisions and weapons after being mustered in. Significantly, Curtis was bypassed in order to get permission for the First Arkansas Cavalry Volunteers, largely because he was busy with other concerns.6

The trickle of Unionists increased to a flood in the summer of 1862, when Confederate General Thomas C. Hindman began instituting the conscription policy in northern Arkansas. Many of the residents of the area did not want to fight for either army, but when they were forced at gunpoint to join the Southern forces, who were rarely paid, poorly fed, and ill-equipped, most men decided to flee to Missouri, or farther north, where they could live in peace. Harrison benefitted greatly from these additions. A raid was made by two regiments of Union cavalry into Fayetteville on June 20, 1862. About 115 men were brought out under protection of the expedition, and these Arkansans were added to the First Arkansas Cavalry.7

Curtis stayed at Forsyth for only a few weeks, just long enough to resupply his men and rest his cavalry mounts. The Army of the Southwest moved southeast to Yellville, Arkansas in late April, destroying a Confederate depot in that town. The Confederates put up fierce resistance at many points, usually in hit-and-run raids on the
lengthening Union line of communications. Curtis pressed on, however, and reached Batesville, located in the north-central part of the state, by May 5. He could move no farther, for the White River and other tributaries that ran parallel to it had overflowed from heavy rains, and the whole country east of Batesville was "flooded for miles beyond".8

Curtis was very well received by the residents of Batesville and Jacksonport, a small town ten miles to the east. He noted that, "I find the Union sentiment in the country very strong, and in town considerable. They (Unionists) seem cheered by the arrival of their ancient and time-honored flag."9 He commented in his dispatch to Halleck the next day that "people are crowding in to take the oath of allegiance."10 Curtis largely ignored these admirers during his stay in Batesville, for reasons unknown. Perhaps the Unionists were bothersome, for many called for him to continue his drive on Little Rock. Curtis encountered troubles in moving, however, and found his army stalled by the end of May. The Confederates had improvised an effective defense, barricading roads and river banks, many of which ran perpendicular to Curtis' line of march to the capital. All of the bridges had been destroyed.11

Also, Curtis had to protect his supply line, which ran over two hundred miles back to Springfield. Guerrillas infested the Missouri section, and Curtis had only left a few thousand men to cover all of southwest Missouri. In Arkansas, matters were even worse. The Union supply trains had to run directly through the mountain hideouts of the guerrillas in the Ozarks, and large detachments of cavalry were
assigned to guard the trains. Curtis encountered stiffer resistance the closer he came to Little Rock, and he took 49 casualties in a skirmish near Searcy on May 24th. Clearly, the Union army had lost its momentum, and Curtis nearly lost his nerve. When Halleck called for more troops east of the Mississippi, Curtis answered in a panicky tone demanding reinforcements for himself. In reality, reinforcements would have been of limited use to Curtis, for he had no supplies for his existing forces. Eventually, Curtis caved in to Halleck's demands and sent ten regiments of infantry north to St. Louis, with barely enough supplies to get them there.\textsuperscript{12}

Halleck devised a scheme where Union gunboats could ascend the White River to relieve some of Curtis' supply problems. But the White River did not cooperate with the Union forces. It dipped to a very low level by late May, and Confederate forces lined the lower banks of the river, preying on undefended supply boats by firing from the shore. Curtis could not drive on Little Rock and could not turn back to Missouri because it would have taken too long to reach his supply bases. He eventually fled eastward to the safety of the Mississippi River, at Helena, Arkansas. There he established a fortified enclave, where he could be resupplied easily and rest his troops.\textsuperscript{13}

The Unionists in Batesville approached Curtis before he left and asked that permission be given to raise a regiment of troops. Curtis telegraphed St. Louis on June 5, informing the Adjutant General of the Department of Missouri that he, "would like to have the privilege of raising, say, ten Arkansas regiments. I would find it easy to raise two or three, and the announcement of such authority would be a
terrible check on rebel drafting." Curtis was given permission by Edwin Stanton, secretary of war, to raise as many troops as he felt were necessary. But there were constraints of supplies, as well as arms, and the Army of the Southwest was fairly active in pillaging the homes of the very men it was trying to recruit. The nearest arms to be had were in St. Louis, too far away to be shipped to Curtis. The Unionists themselves were calling for the establishment of a Northern-backed state government, and when Curtis showed little enthusiasm for this idea or in driving on Little Rock, Unionists began to temper their hopes. They knew that Batesville and Independence County were not important military outposts. The Union army outnumbered the local population two to one. Many Unionists realized that the Union army would move away, and they would have no protection once it did. However, the Unionists of Independence County were still hopeful enough to organize into Home Guard companies, in the outlying areas from Batesville, and tender their services to Curtis. Approximately three hundred men assembled around the edges of the Union army's encampment at Batesville.

When Curtis had gathered enough supplies to maintain his army on its march to Helena, he fled Batesville without even telling the Unionists in the area of his intentions. Some assumed that he was heading for Little Rock, but many of the men thought that he might be redeploying near Helena in order to make a later strike at the capital. The Unionist men accompanied him on his march to Helena, not even having time to inform their families that they were leaving. A majority of the men had horses, but they were not allowed to take them,
because Curtis could spare them no forage. They either died on the march or were sold for a pittance. When the army arrived at Helena, the situation did not improve. Curtis did not move on Little Rock from that point, or from any other. He argued that his men were tired from their march, and that Helena needed to be made a strong defensive outpost. The Unionists accompanying Curtis' army were organized into the First Battalion, Arkansas Infantry Volunteers, and they were only mustered in for six months. These men suffered through the rest of the year at Helena, and then were sent to St. Louis, where they were finally disbanded in December of 1862.16

The First Battalion was never armed, and never received uniforms. It was last on the list of priorities in Curtis' army. More than one half of the men were sick because of poor diets and the malarial climate in Helena. Three of the four officers in the battalion died of disease, and over 150 enlisted men also died of disease. Only three men died of wounds inflicted in battle, incurred in the march from Batesville. It is significant to note that there were no desertions while the regiment was at Helena. Many of these men were so supportive of the Union army, even after being so badly mistreated, that they later reenlisted in other Arkansas regiments that assembled in St. Louis.17

Even with this treatment of Arkansan Unionists, many more men came to the Union army when it was in Helena in the summer of 1862. Some were from the Ozark mountains, but others came from south of the Arkansas River, where they claimed other Unionists were waiting for the Union army to come. Authority was given to Colonel James Morgan of Missouri to raise a second cavalry regiment of Arkansas. It was
originally designated the First Arkansas Mounted Rangers, but because this title was unacceptable to the war department, it was renamed the Second Arkansas Cavalry Regiment. Recruiting proceeded swiftly, and nearly 400 men were mustered in. The climate at Helena, however, was taking its toll, and the men who were not sick were suffering from low morale. Most of the Arkansas troops were used to improve fortifications at Helena, and none of the cavalrymen had horses. The regiment suffered under the same conditions as the First Arkansas Infantry Battalion had experienced. Morgan was dismissed from the service because of age and infirmity, and the men of Company C refused to be mustered in, even though they were only a few men short of the total needed. At the end of 1862, the Second Arkansas Cavalry was still at Helena, where three companies grimly hung on.\textsuperscript{18}

While Curtis delayed at Helena, General John Schofield plotted in St. Louis to take action in southwest Missouri. Schofield had assumed command of the militia in Missouri. Lincoln appointed him to this post because he was more sensitive to the political situation in Missouri than Fremont or Curtis had been. Schofield was not satisfied with command of just the militia, however. He so irritated Halleck in Mississippi with his attempts to gain more control in Missouri that Halleck wrote to Lincoln warning that Schofield and his friends "were intriguing for more to command" in May.\textsuperscript{19} Curtis was sensitive to this maneuvering while he was campaigning, and in September, he applied to Halleck for a leave of absence, ostensibly to work on the completion of a transcontinental railroad bill in the Senate. Curtis actually spent more time rallying political support for his
generalship in Washington, and by September 24th, he had returned to assume command of the newly created Department of Missouri. Schofield now answered directly to Curtis in the chain of command, but when a new army was created in southwest Missouri, Schofield became its leader. General Frederick Steele took command of the forces still in Helena, which were reduced to less than 10,000 men by reassignments, casualties, and disease. But while all of this political activity was going on, Arkansas Unionists were being largely ignored. Ironically, it was the Confederates which helped to renew Union interest in northern Arkansas.

By September 1862, things had changed in the Confederate command in Arkansas as well. Hindman had risen to command the Trans-Mississippi theater, then had been reduced to command just the forces in Arkansas. Finally, he was assigned to lead the Southern forces in northwest Arkansas, which had increased somewhat through the vigorous application of the conscription act. Hindman also assumed loose control over the numerous guerrilla bands on the northern border, which he sent raiding into Missouri in the summer of 1862. The Union outpost at Cassville was so hard pressed to defend its supply line with Springfield that it had to fall back to that point in August. Schofield determined to strike back at Hindman and his forces, which were scattered throughout Arkansas and southwest Missouri on recruiting missions.

Meanwhile, Colonel Harrison was still recruiting the First Arkansas Cavalry, which had received their arms and uniforms in Springfield. They were much better supplied than many of their fellow Arkansans in the east. However, Arkansans may have had another reason to enlist
in the Union army in Springfield. General Egbert Brown, commanding the
District of Southwest Missouri in June, authorized the feeding of adult
male refugees only if they were in the Union army. It turned out that
some guerrillas were slipping into Springfield and stealing foodstuffs,
while taking the oath of allegiance. Enlisting meant that men had to
stay in Springfield, under the watchful eye of Brown and his staff.
Schofield ordered this policy stopped, however, in August, because it
was bad for public relations.21

On August 7th, the First Arkansas Cavalry was mustered in
completely, for three years or the duration of the war. By September,
Schofield was ready to attack Hindman. He was able to strike at a
small rebel force at Newtonia, Missouri, which was crushed on September
15th. Hindman gathered his scattered forces and fled south into the
Boston mountains, while his guerrilla forces still roamed through the
country. One battalion of the First Arkansas Cavalry participated in
the skirmish at Newtonia, and performed well as scouts and messengers
in Schofield’s campaign to regain all of southwest Missouri. He
reoccupied Cassville, as well as Elkhorn Tavern in Arkansas, near the
site of the Pea Ridge battlefield. The First Arkansas Cavalry had a
battalion garrisoning each point, and Schofield ordered it to stage
anti-guerrilla operations from these operations. The third battalion
of the regiment was still at Springfield, training and outfitting.
Over half of the regiment had horses so it was possible to chase
guerrillas, who were always mounted.22

By the end of October, Schofield cleared his supply lines in
Missouri of guerrillas, and was ready to drive into Arkansas. He
wanted cooperation from General James G. Blunt, who commanded Union forces in Kansas and the Indian Territory. Blunt advanced down the western boundary of Arkansas, to a point directly west of Fayetteville. Schofield formulated a plan for Blunt to advance to Fort Smith before the winter arrived, in order to occupy that place to encourage Unionists in the Arkansas River valley. While Union generals plotted, Hindman decided to move. The Confederates had approximately 12,000 men in the area, and they outnumbered Blunt's smaller force nearly two to one. Blunt was also unsupported in his position in western Arkansas. However, when Union spies discovered Hindman's movement, Blunt anxiously requested reinforcements. Schofield started a division in motion toward Fayetteville on December 3. They arrived three days later, after a forced march of 100 miles. The First Arkansas Cavalry accompanied this division to Fayetteville, even though it was unattached to it.23

Hindman expected the Union to send reinforcements by way of Fayetteville to aid Blunt. He intended to crush the reinforcements first, then turn on Blunt. Unfortunately, Schofield ordered only the First Arkansas to advance toward Blunt, who was at Prairie Grove, about 12 miles southwest from Fayetteville. Hindman's entire army was in the way, and the regiment was nearly surrounded on the morning of the 7th as it advanced. When Harrison realized his situation, he tried to organize an orderly retreat, but the regiment broke and ran disgracefully, since the men had never been in a large scale battle, and did not know what to expect.24 A soldier in the 19th Iowa Infantry explained that, "parts (of the First Arkansas) were riding
back in hot haste, many of them without hats or coats. Carbines had been thrown down, and everything that might impede their flight; altogether their retreat partook the nature of a panic. Harrison was able to rally most of the regiment back in Fayetteville, after it fled five or six miles. The regimental supply train was captured, which added more ignomy to the disgrace.

Eventually on December 7th, the Union forces united, and Hindman wasted his army with unsuccessful frontal assaults on the Union positions at Prairie Grove. After the battle, Hindman's army disintegrated much the way Van Dorn's army had after Pea Ridge. Many of the Confederates had been conscripted, and as soon as the battle ended, some showed up in Fayetteville to take the oath of allegiance. Some rebels split away from Hindman to resume their guerrilla activities. Each army suffered over 1,000 wounded or killed, out of nearly equal strengths of around 10,000 men. The battle was a decisive Union victory, and Unionists in Arkansas were generally heartened by the victory. The First Arkansas Cavalry suffered four men killed and four men wounded, but forty-seven men were captured on the retreat to Fayetteville. Blunt censored Harrison for his failure to control his regiment on the battlefield, but neither Schofield nor Curtis mentioned the Arkansans in their official reports of the battle. They were generally forgotten in the euphoria of the Union success.

In retrospect, Prairie Grove was not a fair test of the First Arkansas Cavalry's ability to fight. It had been in several skirmishes before the December battle, and it had performed well as scouts and guides for the Army of the Frontier. Blunt even requested permission
to recruit a company of Arkansans for scouting duty in his division, but Schofield did not relay his request to St. Louis. The Arkansas troops had an intimate knowledge of the area, but many of them had just been given their weapons, and Lt. Col. A.W. Bishop of the First Arkansas complained on December 5th that "all this was expected from two battalions of cavalry, who had never been one hour in a camp of instruction...been only partially clothed -- there was not an overcoat in the line -- and had never been paid."29 The question remains why Bishop did not prepare his men better while they were at Springfield and Cassville in the previous months, but this can be answered by pointing out that he and the other junior officers were all new recruits, and weapon drill was almost impossible without having the weapons in their possession.

Even though Fayetteville was occupied after the battle, Unionists in the area remained skeptical that the army would stay. The trickle of refugees continued toward Springfield through the winter, as long as the road north to Missouri remained relatively safe. John S. Phelps, who was sharing the duties of military governor of Arkansas with General Curtis in October of 1862, wrote that, "Our army has invoked the Union men on the line of its march to rally to support the Union, and then abandons them coolly to the tender mercies of a Hindman and his rebel force."30 Phelps echoed the sentiments of Unionists across the northern half of Arkansas. They had been abandoned once, and they were not so willing to risk their lives to support the Union a second time, if that support was not better rewarded.
The Union army had missed a splendid opportunity to recruit Arkansans and use them to help gain control of the state. The opportunity had been squandered by poor leadership at the army level, and neglect in dealing with supplying the Arkansas troops properly. Morale among even the best treated regiment, the First Arkansas Cavalry, was low in the midst of Union victory at Prairie Grove. Politically, Schofield and his subordinates had smoothed over problems with Unionists in Missouri, but it remained to be seen whether they could repeat their success in Arkansas.
FOOTNOTES

1Jay Monaghan, Civil War on the Western Border, 1854-1865, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), p. 251. Curtis could barely meet his own supply goals when he remained stationary. There was little chance that the Union could have pursued Van Dorn across the desolate Boston mountains.


3Curtis to Halleck, April 5, 1862, O.R., Series I, Volume 8, p. 662; Halleck to Curtis, April 6, 1862, O.R., p. 666.


6AAG, p. 55. There is no indication that Curtis even knew of the existence of the First Arkansas Cavalry Volunteers until he himself asked for permission to recruit Arkansans, in late July, 1862. His request was granted, after a numerical redesignation had been arranged for his own Arkansas cavalry regiment.


8Curtis to Ketchum, June 16, 1862, O.R., Series I, Volume 13, pp. 370-371. Curtis slightly overstated the conditions east of Batesville. Confederate officers were recruiting in the area throughout the summer, which proves that the area was inhabitable and indeed, suitable for movement.


10Curtis to Ketchum, May 6, 1862, O.R., Volume 13, p. 371. Curtis doubted the loyalty of many of these erstwhile Unionists, which
was prudent. However, he alienated the true loyalists in the area by not placing faith in any of them.

11Report of Curtis, May 24, 1862, O.R., Volume 13, pp. 69; Curtis to Ketchum, May 28, 1862, O.R., Volume 13, p. 401. The Union lost 8 men to drowning while trying to cross the Little Red River near Searcy.

12Curtis to Steele, May 13, 1862, O.R., Volume 13, p. 380.

13Nola A. James, "The Civil War in Independence County", Independence County Chronicle 26, (October 1984-June 1985), pp. 28-35. The area under Union occupation for the next year was roughly the shape of a triangle, with the line of the Memphis and Little Rock R.R. running across the north, the junction of the Arkansas River and the Mississippi River in the south, and ending in the west near Clarendon, Ark., on the White River.

14Curtis to Ketchum, June 5, 1862, O.R., Series I, Volume 13, p. 418.

15James, "The Civil War in Independence County", pp. 16-17, 32-33. Many had sent their families northward, for guerrillas roamed most areas of the countryside.

16AAG, p. 245.

17Curtis to Halleck, October 15, 1862, O.R., Series I, Volume 13, p. 738; AAG, p. 245. There are no totals for desertion in the Adjutant General’s report, so it is assumed that no one deserted. The records are otherwise complete.

18Halleck to Curtis, November 22, 1862, O.R., Series I, Volume 13, p. 812; AAG, p. 93. Bishop referred to Colonel Morgan’s dismissal as "an embarrassment" to the regiment.


20Steele to Halleck, September 20, 1862, O.R., Series I, Volume 13, p. 654; General Orders No. 1, September 24, 1862, O.R., Volume 13, p. 666; Galusha Anderson, A Border City During the Civil War (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1908), pp. 280-282. Steele was much more active than Curtis had been, staging daily patrols to the White River and chasing guerrillas across out of the area.


22AAG, pp. 55-56. The Unionists were particularly well suited for anti-guerrilla operations, because they had intimate knowledge of the terrain.
23 Blunt to Schofield, November 16, 1862, O.R., Series I, Volume 13, p. 796; Wiley Britton, Memoirs of the Rebellion (Chicago: 1882), pp. 33-58; Monaghan, Western Border, p. 258. One of the reasons Hindman was so slow to move was the fact that he could not keep his unwilling conscripts from deserting if he marched his army more than a couple of miles a day.


26 AAG, p. 56. Bishop blamed the rout of the First Arkansas Cavalry on a nearby Missouri regiment which broke before the Arkansans did, and caused their lines to become entangled. Schofield does not explore the matter in detail in his report.

27 Monaghan, Western Border, pp. 261-273; Britton, Memoirs, pp. 39-51. Hindman put his Arkansas conscripts in his front lines, so they could not retreat from the battle without running into his more faithful soldiers from Louisiana and Texas.


29 Bishop, Loyalty on the Frontier, p. 63.

30 Phelps to Halleck, October 1, 1862, O.R., Series I, Volume 13, p. 685.
CHAPTER III

"TO SUFFER WHEREVER THE REBEL FLAG IS ALLOWED TO FLOAT"

In the afterglow of the Northern success at Prairie Grove, General John Schofield and his staff made preparations to pursue the remnants of Thomas Hindman's battered army southward. Hindman moved to Fort Smith, but only a skeleton force remained to guard this post, while he continued his retreat even farther south to the Red River valley where winter forage was plentiful. Schofield's advance columns broke through the thin line of rebel pickets in the Boston mountains on December 28, and the Union forces began shelling Fort Smith on the next day. But even as Hindman prepared to order his remaining units to evacuate Fort Smith, Schofield retreated northward, compelled to do so because of his own supply problems. Many Unionists in northwest Arkansas began to despair once again, for they felt that Schofield would repeat the policies of Curtis and stage a wholesale retreat. Many began to pack their belongings in anticipation of another exodus northward. But Schofield did leave behind small forces in both Fayetteville and Maysville, on the Indian Territory border. The bulk of the Union forces continued north to their winter camps around Springfield.¹

42
While in Fayetteville in early January, Schofield began to contemplate what measures he needed to take in order to strengthen the Union hold on Arkansas. He did not accurately gauge the level of Union support in Arkansas, stating in a dispatch to Military Governor John Phelps in St. Louis that, "Very few volunteers for the general service can be obtained." Instead, Schofield wished to enroll some of the loyalists in a local militia unit. It is possible that Schofield was too accustomed to recruiting in Missouri, where most Unionists in late 1862 preferred to stay at home instead of serving in the volunteer forces. Many loyalists in Arkansas were of a different bent, however.

A refugee from Arkadelphia, William Pierre, sent a message to General Samuel Curtis in St. Louis, informing him of the situation south of the Arkansas river. Pierre believed that the Union men would rise up in some of the counties south of the river if Little Rock was taken, and many Unionists in the area had already armed themselves from weapons taken from the rebel forces in the area. The story did not receive any attention from Curtis, however, nor was it forwarded to Schofield, who might have made some use of the information. Curtis was busy arguing with Governor Hamilton Gamble of Missouri and President Lincoln. Gamble caused many problems for Curtis over the next few months, and Schofield might have secretly encouraged the political maneuverings, since he had much to gain in removing Curtis from command of the district. Curtis continued to resist however, and his political
support in Washington did not fade for quite some time. The clout he gained after his victory at Pea Ridge was able to sustain him in his command longer than even Schofield expected.3

Colonel M. La Rue Harrison, commanding the First Arkansas Cavalry at Fayetteville, experienced a fairly uneventful winter. His forces benefitted from the few months they were allowed to train and drill, and morale rose because they were actually posted in their home state. Harrison’s main job was to hold Fayetteville and scout in various directions to keep guerrilla activity to a minimum. He also had the responsibility of protecting the Fayetteville hospital that housed Union soldiers wounded in the Prairie Grove battle. As the Union soldiers convalesced, Harrison’s men escorted a steady trickle of wounded Union soldiers back to Springfield, where they were eventually shipped home.4

It was also a good time to recruit for Harrison. Since his officers were not involved in strenuous martial duties, many took recruiting parties to towns in the countryside to stir up support for the Union cause. In a Union meeting on January 27th at Fayetteville, largely orchestrated by Harrison, speeches were given and nearly "1,000 Arkansas Union men (were) present, exclusive of Arkansas troops stationed at this post."5 In an indication of their strong Unionism, the loyalists petitioned Congress for the election of a representative from western Arkansas. Enough men expressed interest in enlisting that Harrison estimated fifteen companies of infantry could be raised just in Washington county alone. Dr. James Johnson of Huntsville asked Harrison if he could take ten of these companies to form the
nucleus of an Arkansas Federal infantry regiment. At this point, Harrison was unsure whether Schofield would insist on keeping the Arkansas Unionists in home guard units or allow them to enlist as volunteers. Harrison did request more arms for Fayetteville, so the men might protect themselves and their families.⁶

Harrison had doubted whether Curtis would allow recruitment of local militia units for home defense. Another meeting was held in Huntsville, twenty miles to the east of Fayetteville, to help Johnson to recruit more men in that area. The second meeting might also have been held to show Curtis and Schofield that the time to recruit successfully was slipping away. Arkansas Military Governor John S. Phelps was ill in St. Louis, and his absence in this debate probably hurt the Arkansans' cause. Phelps had not been reticent about going over Curtis' head to Lincoln himself. In this spirit, Amos B. Eno wrote Curtis from near Helena in late January, requesting that a drive begin immediately against Little Rock. Eno, an associate of Phelps, was attempting to revive the flagging efforts to recruit Unionists in Arkansas. In Eno's opinion, the Arkansas River line could be held indefinitely, and would prevent the Confederates from staging more raids into Missouri to disrupt supply lines. Curtis rebuffed the unionist, saying that he did not recognize Eno's self-designation of "adjutant general". He clearly intended to keep his own counsel when it came to moving on Little Rock. Curtis, and Schofield as well, sometimes resented the civilian advice to move on the state capital.⁷
Colonel William Phillips assumed command of the military situation in northwest Arkansas in mid-February, 1863. Phillips was active in sending scouts to the Arkansas River, as well as many raiding parties as far east and south as Clarksville. He ordered Harrison to entrench Fayetteville, fearing an attack by Hindman on the area in the early Spring. Phillips had prior experience in fighting in the Indian Territory and recruiting Indians for the Union. He believed the supply and recruitment of Indians was a top priority, and he generally neglected the Arkansas troops under his authority. He did have great respect for their scouting abilities, and he used them extensively for these purposes, but in a letter to Curtis on February 17th, Phillips complained that, "the Arkansas force is very raw, and ought not, I would respectfully suggest, be left without the countenance of other troops." Phillips protested the reassignment of the Tenth Illinois Cavalry from Fayetteville, leaving him with only four companies of the Sixth Kansas Cavalry to "watch over" the unreliable troops. What Phillips neglected to mention was that he also had three regiments of undisciplined Indians to watch over.8

These Indians injured recruiting efforts in northwest Arkansas, because repentant Confederate soldiers who had been conscripted earlier were loath to surrender themselves to Union Indian soldiers, who were believed to murder and scalp any prisoners taken. There were even rumors that groups of Confederate soldiers after the Prairie Grove battle journeyed far to the north near Mount Vernon, Missouri, in order to surrender themselves to white troops. If this was true, then the men that could have been so easily recruited in Arkansas were
fleeing to Missouri, where they were enlisting instead in Missouri state militia units.⁹

Phillips was a favorite subordinate of General Blunt, and had been sent north in January in order to coordinate recruitment and supply of Union troops in Kansas. He continued to report to Blunt, as well as Curtis, his immediate superior. Once Schofield (who still commanded the Army of the Frontier), moved his headquarters to St. Louis, he was almost entirely deprived of information from Arkansas. Phillips did nothing to update Schofield about the situation surrounding the Arkansas Federals, and Schofield did not press the issue. It was Phillips' idea in early March to take his Indian brigade southward through the Indian Territory to the Arkansas River to find more forage for his ponies. He intended to leave Harrison and his Arkansans in Fayetteville to guard a large area that had been denuded almost completely of forage. The First Arkansas Cavalry had very few mounts, and those were in poor shape from lack of food. Stories of horses eating each other's tails and manes were common from Fayetteville. In a letter sent to Curtis dated March 3rd, Phillips protested that if he was not allowed to advance to the Arkansas River, he would have to fall back into southern Missouri for lack of forage. He did not make the logical conclusion that the Arkansas troops in Fayetteville could not be supported from either place, since the town was more than two days' march from both locations.¹⁰

No matter what Phillips' differences were with Harrison, the Indian brigade commander was pleased with the recruitment of Arkansas troops. By March 10th, the First Arkansas Infantry had begun to fill up, and
there were several "volunteer militia" outposts set up in the countryside near Fayetteville. Phillips was unsure as to the legitimacy of these groups of men, since the last order regarding Arkansas troop enlistment came from Schofield, and he had proposed creation of home guard units, not enlistment in the volunteer army. Phillips continued to allow these militia units to exist, because in his words, "most of these men fully committed themselves prior to that time, and have to keep up these volunteer organizations. Some men, long desiring to be loyal, do not hesitate to make unequivocal demonstrations. For protection, they have to join the service, or, if reluctant to take that step, they are compelled thus to organize to protect their families, and being...without pay it is not easily done." These units were given rations occasionally, and only armed with weapons taken from Confederates. The large number and variety of weapons found discarded on the battlefield by the rebels at Prairie Grove supplied many of these home guard units. Generally, there were only 20 to 50 men in each of these organizations, located in a village or defensible location in the countryside.\footnote{11}

These groups of men generally reported to Harrison, and he used them to good effect as scouts and spies, sending them on frequent raids to the Arkansas River. This irritated Phillips slightly, since he felt that he had done as much as anyone in organizing and supplying the Arkansas troops. Phillips had requested ordnance to be sent to Springfield, so that a battery of Arkansas artillerists could be organized. He also appointed a surgeon for the First Arkansas Cavalry, something Harrison should have resolved months previously. Finally,
Phillips believed Harrison lacked battlefield courage, although he had never said so directly to Curtis. The poor performance of the First Arkansas Cavalry at Prairie Grove still weighed heavily in Phillips' mind, even if Harrison himself was unconcerned.

By March 27th, Phillips continued to view the condition of the First Arkansas Cavalry as poor, even though he had not viewed the command personally for at least a month. He informed Blunt that the Arkansans could only mount 100 men in late March, because of lack of forage. However, when informing Curtis of the situation, he downplayed the severity of the conditions in Fayetteville, attributing the situation to a lack of discipline on Harrison's part. Harrison was loath to venture into the countryside and forcibly take horses from the people, unlike Phillips. Harrison did have knowledge of the enemy's whereabouts, but because he had no horses, he could not pursue the numerous guerrilla bands effectively. Phillips did not want the true state of affairs in northwest Arkansas to be known to his superiors, for it might have meant that he would have to give up his plans for staying in the Indian Territory and driving on Fort Smith. He informed Curtis on March 27th that, "guerrillas have been pretty well driven out of this section." This was certainly not the case.12

Harrison was so distressed that he had been left at Fayetteville with a poorly armed and supplied force, without hope of immediate support from any Union force, that he telegraphed Curtis for help. By April 2nd, his force had seen no clothing issued to it since November, 1862, and there were about 700 members of the First Arkansas Infantry in Fayetteville still wearing butternut uniforms that the Confederacy
provided its conscripts. Harrison believed that if his force was called upon to fight, it could not do so effectively. Phillips ordered Harrison to prepare for a march to Van Buren, ten miles from Fort Smith. The Arkansas Unionists had not seen a supply train from Springfield since December. Requests for supplies had gone unanswered, and the First Arkansas Cavalry had only four wagons remaining to haul supplies in. There were less than 40 rounds of ammunition per soldier in the town, and although 800 revolvers had been set aside in Springfield for the Arkansans, they could not be brought to Fayetteville for lack of transportation. To make matters worse, guerrillas roamed the countryside. A band of nearly 800 rebels operating in southwest Missouri cut the supply route between Cassville and Springfield. A dozen smaller bands roamed within twenty miles of Fayetteville, nightly attacking isolated sentries and outlying outposts. When sent a copy of the telegram to Curtis, Phillips only exhorted Harrison to fortify more, and "exert yourself so as not to embarrass me."\(^{13}\)

To complicate matters, one division of the Union Army of the Frontier moved to Carrollton, Arkansas over the winter, and recruits were beginning to come into that area as well, about 40 miles east of Fayetteville. This force was under command of Schofield and Curtis, but directly led by Colonel William Weer, who had been present at Prairie Grove. Weer complained that many men were ready to join the Union army, but he had no arms to give them. Orders were sent to Weer allowing him to take what weapons he needed from Springfield to arm these men. These weapons had been earmarked for Harrison's
command, and for the First Arkansas Infantry. Weer was soon ordered to move back to Forsyth, Missouri, for he was too far south to be supported from Springfield. When Weer arrived at Forsyth, he suggested that all the forces in Fayetteville be moved to Carroll county and be stationed in north-central Arkansas instead. As it was, Weer felt there were more recruits to be had in north-central Arkansas, and more forage to be had for Harrison’s cavalry mounts. In fact, Weer abandoned most of the Union men at Carrollton, which he gave only a few muskets and no ammunition. Many Union families fled with Weer’s division when he moved northward, which by this point was the option available to many Arkansans Unionists.14

Curtis did not have much to say regarding the situation in Arkansas. Schofield was reassigned to the Army of the Cumberland in April, depriving Harrison of one less supporter. Curtis told Blunt on April 10th that he was trying to secure guns for the artillery battery Harrison was raising at Fayetteville, and that he was glad Harrison was recruiting more infantry, for he could send him no new horses for his existing cavalry. Evidently, Curtis did not intend to alleviate Harrison’s supply problems. When Harrison complained of guerrillas surrounding Fayetteville, Phillips blamed Weer, saying that Weer had pushed the guerrillas from the east toward Fayetteville.15

Incredibly, no one was willing to support Harrison at Fayetteville, even as the Confederates moved a force of nearly 2,000 men north of the Arkansas River at Clarksville within striking distance of Harrison’s men. Harrison decided to get what supplies he could, and sent a small wagon train to Cassville and Springfield on April 6th escorted by over
one hundred soldiers on foot, further reducing his strength.16

General William Cabell, commander of the Confederate forces in northwest Arkansas, decided to attack Fayetteville on April 18th. He had been advised that no more than 1,000 demoralized Arkansas traitors were defending Fayetteville, and he reasoned that they would not put up much of a fight. But Harrison was able to form his men behind prepared breastworks, and although the rebels launched their attack at dawn, capturing several dismounted pickets south of town, the Unionists assembled on the parade ground in minutes and were ready for the main assault when it came. Cabell foolishly launched a frontal assault against the Union breastworks, and was forced back. One of the Confederate artillery pieces was silenced when the First Arkansas Cavalry charged it. By noon, the Confederates withdrew southeast toward Ozark, suffering 20 men killed, 50 wounded, and 55 captured. The Unionists had 4 killed, 26 wounded, and 51 missing.17

Harrison was unable to pursue because he still lacked cavalry mounts, although he did send scouts to follow Cabell back to Ozark, approximately 50 miles from Fayetteville. Significantly, the Confederates lost over 200 horses, many of which stampeded into Union lines and were captured. Some bushwackers had joined in the Confederate assault, but these men were largely ineffective, and played no major role. After the battle, they drifted away from Cabell’s force. Harrison only utilized about two-thirds of his cavalry regiment, and the entire infantry regiment was held in reserve during the engagement. In reality, less than half of each force was actively engaged. Also, the Confederates proved they were as desperate for
decent weapons as the Unionists, since they were only armed with shotguns, or carried no weapons at all.\textsuperscript{18}

In the days following the battle, some of the Union missing returned to Fayetteville, having fled during the fighting, while others were paroled. Harrison received congratulatory notices from several superiors, but notably, Phillips did not contact Harrison at all. Curtis censured Phillips for allowing the Unionists to be unsupported in Fayetteville, warning that "you will see that such risks are not repeated." Phillips took his complaints to Blunt instead of Curtis. Phillips felt that since the Arkansas troops were occasionally receiving orders from Curtis as well as himself, that he should not be held responsible for Harrison's actions.\textsuperscript{19}

Even at this late date, Phillips renewed his efforts to move the Arkansans into the Indian Territory, so he could drive on the Confederate Indian forces.\textsuperscript{20} He displayed little feeling for the Arkansans' plight and made no effort to supply them. At this point in the war, it is clear that Curtis and most of his subordinates saw the arming and deployment of Arkansas Federals as a delicate problem best handled by ignoring it. The Unionists were political pawns fought over by Curtis and Blunt, and occasionally Schofield, who each wanted the men assigned to their own commands. Phillips wanted them for use in the Indian Territory. It seems that no one in high command wanted to use the Arkansas Unionists for what they were best suited, and that was to hold sections of their own state.

Harrison was ordered by Curtis to pull out of Fayetteville in the week following the engagement. Because the Arkansas troops had no
supplies, and the supply train had not returned from Cassville, Harrison had no choice. He could not object to the retreat, because he realized that his command would never be supplied if they stayed. Harrison learned an important lesson from the lack of support from Curtis. If the Arkansas Federals were ever to establish a presence again in Fayetteville, they would have to make their own arrangements for ammunition, food, and clothing. Phillips issued orders to Harrison at about the same time, telling him to move into the Indian Territory. Harrison did not reply to the Indian commander. The Arkansas troops moved to Cassville on April 25. Parts of the units were sent on to Springfield, where they could receive more training. This was especially true for the First Arkansas Infantry.21

On May 24, General Curtis finally lost his political battle, and was removed from command of the Department of Missouri. Schofield was named as his replacement. Generally, things were quiet in the western parts of Arkansas during the summer of 1863. There were still many guerrillas roaming about the countryside, but periodic raids by Harrison and Phillips into northwest Arkansas kept these bands on the move. Meanwhile, General Frederick Steele was still at Helena, as well as the Second Arkansas Cavalry, but a drive on Little Rock was postponed until the outcome of Ulysses S. Grant’s campaign against Vicksburg was completed.

By July, the Mississippi river was sealed off, and Grant refocused his attention on matters to the east. It seemed as if the Trans-Mississippi theater would be totally neglected. But Grant remembered Steele’s assistance during the Vicksburg campaign, and he rewarded the
brigadier general with reinforcements and a mandate to take Little Rock before winter. Steele left Helena on August 10th, and he intended to move much quicker than anyone had believed possible. Significantly, there were no Arkansas Federals in Steele’s expeditionary force, since the Second Arkansas Cavalry was sent into northeast Arkansas to wage anti-guerrilla operations.22

Steele began his campaign with 12,000 soldiers, but a considerable number of these had been striken with malaria and other diseases from staying too long in the unhealthy climate at Helena. Sterling Price faced down Steele with about an equal number of men, but many of these were Arkansas conscripts, and poorly armed and supplied. Nevertheless, Price promised a vicious fight for Little Rock, and he fortified a two-mile stretch north of the town in anticipation of Steele’s arrival. Price also turned loose more guerrilla parties in the Union rear, hoping to interfere with Steele’s supply.23

But Steele made arrangements to protect his supply line back to Helena. He established a garrison at DeValls Bluff, a high point on the White River which could be easily defended with a small force, and he moved his sick men to this location, which was healthier than Helena. He then swung northwest toward Brownsville, where his cavalry punished a small force of Price’s which lingered too long on the scene. Brownsville was less than 50 miles northeast from Little Rock, and in two weeks, Steele had projected most of his strength to this point. He then hit upon a plan to split his force, sending his cavalry division south of the Arkansas River and launching a simultaneous drive from both sides of the river on the capital, hoping to frighten
Price into withdrawing from his entrenchments. The plan worked brilliantly. Steele moved into Little Rock’s outskirts on September 9th, and the municipal authorities surrendered the next day. Price’s force was in headlong retreat southwest toward Arkadelphia. However, Steele could not pursue too closely, for he had been compelled to leave part of his forces behind in his precipitate advance on the capital, and had only 7,000 men when he entered Little Rock. The arsenal and many key buildings were saved from fire by Steele’s troops, and Arkansas Unionist civilians began streaming in on the heels of Steele’s victorious army.24

Along with the civilians came Confederate deserters, wishing to turn themselves in to the Federal authorities. In several counties north of Little Rock, small groups of Unionists had banded together for protection against bushwackers. These same groups began sending their leaders to the capital, hoping for official recognition and possibly weapons as well. Steele conferred with Unionists, who came seeking permission to raise a regiment in Independence county. This was the same county that had provided men for the First Arkansas Infantry Battalion, which wasted away at Helena from neglect in the previous year. Fifty men had already chosen a leader, and they wanted weapons in return for enlisting in whatever outfit the Union authorities saw appropriate. Steele knew there was a stockpile of weapons in Memphis, and there were quite a few in Little Rock itself, discarded by Price’s retreating army. These logistical arrangements, as well as the fact that Little Rock was accessible from most of the state, made the capital the logical center of recruiting activity for Arkansas Federals
throughout the rest of the war. Steele took advantage of his position, and within the next week granted permission for home guard companies to be raised in Conway, Pulaski, Perry, Independence, and Prairie Counties, most of which were to the west of Little Rock.\textsuperscript{25}

Isaac Murphy, the lone dissenter at the Arkansas secession convention in 1861, also came to Little Rock with Steele’s army. Through a quiet determination, Murphy assumed leadership over the Arkansas Unionists. Nearly every Unionist trusted Murphy, for he had been the only delegate who opposed secession. There were other rivals in the capital, but all had been associated with the Confederate effort at one time or another. It also helped the future governor’s cause when Steele endorsed Murphy for the position.\textsuperscript{26}

On July 19, 1862, Lincoln had appointed John S. Phelps of Missouri as military governor of Arkansas, so that the small part of Arkansas under Union control, mostly eastern Arkansas, would have some form of government. Phelps fell victim to the same sicknesses that afflicted many soldiers in Helena that summer. Almost one year later, Phelps had not returned from his hospital bed in St. Louis, and Lincoln relieved him on July 9, 1863. He chose not to name a successor, since he realized that military governors came in conflict with both civilian and military forces, and Phelps had proved this by irritating Curtis a number of times earlier in the war. But when Steele took Little Rock in September, it was clear that Lincoln needed to make arrangements to provide a government for the state, and the President began to lean more toward the civilian side.\textsuperscript{27}
The Arkansas Unionists began holding several large meetings in towns throughout the state, since the newspapers in various cities had stopped operations because of the war, and there was no other way of spreading news to large groups of people. Many of these meetings produced petitions for a state government, and a few endorsed Murphy for the governor's position. An election was held in northern Arkansas on November 23, encompassing twenty-eight counties. Even in the southern parts of the state, a few Unionist delegates made their way through the lines to Little Rock, upon hearing that a government was forming in the capital. On December 18, 1863, Lincoln issued his Amnesty and Reconstruction Proclamation, which provided some legitimacy to what the Unionists in Arkansas were doing. According to Lincoln's plan, Arkansas needed to show that at least one-tenth of its eligible voters in 1860 had taken the loyalty oath and participated in the recent election. There was little doubt the number of Unionists in Arkansas alone amounted to ten percent, not counting repentant Confederate soldiers who had not yet taken loyalty oaths. Confederate officers were not allowed pardons at this point.28

For the remainder of 1863, Murphy battled the wealthy cotton planters that flocked to Little Rock seeking favors from Steele in regards to opening trade with the North. Murphy despised these men, and he believed the true Unionists in the mountains were being ignored because they had no wealth or bribes to offer the Union officials. The true state of affairs fell somewhere in between. The "Mountain Feds", as the poor loyalists in the highlands were called by Union officers, received increasing attention for the rest of the war, but the wealthy
planters were able to get quite a few bales of cotton through Union lines, albeit at reduced value.²⁹

At nearly the same time Little Rock fell to Steele’s advancing army, General James Blunt captured Fort Smith at the gateway to Indian Territory. The Confederates had been struggling in the area since the disaster at Prairie Grove late in 1862, and due to constant desertions and supply problems, the rebels in Indian Territory and western Arkansas awaited the Union advance with no hope of stopping it. Blunt’s fast-moving columns took Fort Smith on September 1, and the small Confederate forces in the area retreated toward the Red River valley on the Texas border, while still more rebels took to the Ouachita Mountains to become guerrillas and bushwackers. The First Arkansas Infantry was instrumental in the Fort Smith campaign, providing reliable scouts and performing well in several skirmishes with Confederate Indians and conscripts.³⁰

Fort Smith had been a center of Union activity in 1860 and 1861, and in the November 23 election of state government delegates, Crawford County (Fort Smith) saw over 800 voters turn out, from a total of 1400 who voted in the area in 1860. This was an impressive amount considering the number of Unionists which had taken their families northward into Missouri in the previous two years.³¹ Colonel William Cloud led a small force from Fort Smith, parallel to the Arkansas River for 200 miles to the southeast, in order to establish contact with Steele’s forces in Little Rock. In his report of the expedition, which covered territory never before entered by Union forces, Cloud related that, "The people come to me by the hundreds, and to show their
earnestness they brought in their old guns and joined us. In the
attack upon Dardanelle (a village approximately 80 miles from Fort
Smith) I was assisted by three officers and about 100 men...and it was
a novel sight to see men with the regular gray uniform...fighting side
by side with the blue of the army, and they were fighting (against)
their old command." Cloud left the repentant Confederates at
Dardanelle and returned to Fort Smith, giving them the duty of battling
the bushwackers which seemed to multiply daily along the river.\textsuperscript{32}

Schofield was encouraged by all the activity in the Fort Smith and
Little Rock areas, and made preparations for Harrison to move back to
Fayetteville. On September 15, Harrison led the First Arkansas Cavalry
back into northwest Arkansas, and reconstructed the telegraph line as
he went. What Schofield did not understand, as Steele and Blunt did,
was that the outposts in Arkansas needed to be kept well supplied, and
lines of communication needed to be protected. Steele had protected
his supply line to Memphis with a number of garrisons, and Blunt had
immediately made arrangements to have supply convoys set up to provide
for Fort Smith. But Harrison was left isolated again at Fayetteville.
It seemed as if the Union commanders in southwest Missouri could not
learn from their mistakes, and the Arkansas Unionists once again paid
the price for these mistakes.\textsuperscript{33}

To add problems for Colonel Harrison in Fayetteville, the rebels
launched a raid with over 1200 men into southwest Missouri in late
September. The raiding Southerners sliced Harrison’s supply and
communication lines to Cassville, but still wanting to prove to
authorities in St. Louis that his Arkansans were good soldiers,
Harrison eagerly committed his men to the pursuit of the Confederates, even though it meant leaving few men back to guard Fayetteville. By this point, the true Unionists in northwest Arkansas had either enlisted in the volunteer army, or had fled north into Missouri. Those still in the vicinity in September were neither Confederate or Union sympathizers. They simply wanted peace, and were ready to align themselves with whatever military force occupied the area. Many of them had openly expressed Unionist sympathies early in 1862, before Union troops left the area, but they had been punished by Cabell’s occupying forces in the summer of 1863, by losing their livestock, horses, or even their homes. A few of the more vocal loyalists were hung by Cabell in order to make an example of the rest. Bushwackers had continued these atrocities throughout the summer of 1863, and they did not stop when Harrison reentered the area in September. There was no friendly reception for the Arkansas Federals when they entered Fayetteville in September, for many people were too frightened to risk open acceptance of the new occupation.  

Fayetteville was threatened in the next month by a large guerrilla force from the Boston mountains. The Confederate force amounted to nearly 600 men, and demanded the surrender of the town while Harrison was off in pursuit of another guerrilla column in Missouri. One battalion of the First Arkansas Cavalry was holding the town, and refused to surrender. An attack was never launched, however, because the Union troops had improved the breastworks constructed in the previous year. For the rest of the year, Harrison kept his Arkansans busy on anti-guerrilla operations, procuring some horses from
both local Unionists and defeated guerrillas. In nearly all cases in 1863, the guerrillas were better mounted than the Arkansas Federals who pursued them, but the imbalance was beginning to shift in the Unionists' favor by the end of the year.35

The Union forces in other parts of Arkansas remained satisfied with the areas that they occupied, but they did not remain inactive throughout the winter. An engagement to the south of Fort Smith devolved into sharp skirmishes where rebel forces were repulsed when attacking Union outposts near Waldron, Arkansas. Elements of the First Arkansas Cavalry raided eastward from Fayetteville toward Yellville in December, bringing out prospective recruits and their families, at the same time clashing with rebel forces in the area. The Union outpost at Pine Bluff, 30 miles southeast of Little Rock, was attacked by a force triple its size, but was able to repulse the Confederates with only minor losses. Union forces based in southeast Missouri, a lightly populated area of that state even in peacetime, raided through the relatively uninhabited parts of northeastern Arkansas and captured hundreds of Confederate soldiers on several different raids in the last months of 1863.36

When the various movements of Union forces are examined in the last half of 1863, it appears the momentum greatly favored the possible Union occupation of the entire state of Arkansas within 1864. But even as many of the operations against the guerrillas were succeeding, the stationary garrisons across the state were beginning to suffer. The Union maintained a force at Helena, which still suffered from a number of tropical diseases. The forces at Fort Smith and Fayetteville were
undersupplied as usual, and forage for horses was critically low as well. Steele held out in Little Rock with a force of about 10,000 men, but some of his better troops were sent out of the state in the fall to aid General Williams S. Rosecrans' army which was bottled up at Chattanooga, Tennessee. The efforts to create a state government in Arkansas were progressing slowly but steadily, but more importantly, the Unionists' efforts were being supported (but only morally) by Lincoln and Union military authorities. Things were beginning to improve for Arkansas Unionists, but there were still many things to be done.
FOOTNOTES


6 Ibid. It is unknown whether Phelps replied to Harrison, but in any case, Phelps was in no position to help the Unionists in matters of supply, for he had no influence in determining Union supply priorities.

7 Eno to Curtis, January 26, 1863, O.R., Volume 22, Part II, p. 75. Eno had been designated (by parties unknown) as "Secretary pro tem. of Arkansas, and Adjutant-General".


9 Britton, Memoirs, pp. 148-149.


25. Special Orders No. 28, September 15 and 24, 1863, O.R., Volume 22, Part II, pp. 533, 571. These two orders were common announcements made to the loyal citizens of these counties by Steele's staff, and were intended to induce enlistment.


27. Ibid., p. 27.

28. Ibid., pp. 49-51. Colonel James M. Johnson, who had organized the First Arkansas Infantry Regiment, was nominated for Congress by the new Arkansas state legislature.

29. Ibid. One of Murphy's bitter rivals, William Fishback, also served as an officer in the Fourth Arkansas Cavalry, and later operated
a newspaper supporting Murphy and his government called The Unconditional Unionist.

30Bearss and Gibson, *Fort Smith*, pp. 266-269.

31Smith, *Courage of a Southern Unionist*, p. 50.


CHAPTER IV

"WE ENGAGED THE ENEMY AND DROVE THEM IN THE MOST SPIRITED MANNER"

The winter of 1863-64 was particularly harsh for those living in Arkansas. Forces from both Union and Confederate armies had stripped the state of the barest of necessities. Many people not closely allied to one side chose to flee for the relative safety of St. Louis or for the more tranquil areas of Texas. Some Arkansans still decided for the Union, regardless of their past experiences with Union troops. A steady stream of petitions reached Little Rock, asking for pardons or assistance in forming new Arkansas Federal regiments. Yet the motives behind joining the winning side were changing. The lure of food and clothing, as well as the safety that could be attained inside a Union garrison, were as attractive as the ideology that Union commanders represented. Most committed Union men had already joined the Northern effort. In 1864, more neutral Arkansas would shift their loyalties to the Federal occupants of the capital, in an early attempt to rebuild the state.

Confederate high commanders had more ambitious plans than their Union counterparts. They had several objectives, including the destruction of Steele’s army at Little Rock, and an invasion of
Missouri which Sterling Price would lead. Steele’s force was low on supplies, and the best bet for the Confederacy in retaking Little Rock was to starve him out. Steele attempted to get supplies through on several occasions, but the Union war planners did not consider his army to be a high priority. Most Union commanders hoped that Steele would be able to hold his position without any material assistance, and that an opportunity for an offensive might present itself later in the year. For the time being, however, Steele had to make his own opportunities and fend for himself in the area of supplies.

The Union high command may not have desired any action in the first part of 1864 in Arkansas, but Lincoln had different plans. A plan was developed where General Nathaniel Banks would drive up the Red River of Louisiana and take the Rebel stronghold of Shreveport. Steele was called upon to aid this campaign by driving south from Little Rock. The combined Union forces in the campaign easily outnumbered Kirby Smith’s army, which had to be divided to hold off the converging Union columns. Price commanded a large cavalry force which was able to delay, but never stop Steele.\(^1\) Banks, however, was slowed to a crawl by spring rains, and turned back halfway to Shreveport. Steele departed from the Little Rock perimeter in late March, and had made good progress in his push southward. But his lack of supplies began to tell upon his forces. Less than one month into the campaign, and with no word from Banks or anyone else, Steele came to a halt at the Ouachita River. He turned southeast toward Camden, the only sizeable
town in the area, and hoped to find supplies there. However, Steele was sorely disappointed. The Confederates had previously stripped the area of supplies, with Price’s cavalry practicing a scorched-earth policy in trying to delay Steele. The Unionists in Arkansas were momentarily stopped, at least until Steele could get word of his plight back to Little Rock.\(^2\)

Steele’s plight was more serious than even he realized. Confederate guerrillas and larger bands of Price’s cavalry controlled the intervening land between Little Rock and Camden. Only a large resupply convoy of wagons would be able to make it through. A group of about one hundred wagons was assaulted and wiped out at Poison Spring near the end of April. The Union commander at Pine Bluff, Arkansas assembled a relief force and was able to reach Camden the next day, but with some very bad news. Banks had indeed fallen back, and Kirby Smith was moving northward to combine with Price and counterattack Steele’s undersupplied army. Steele however, was determined to fight at Camden if he could be resupplied. He resolved to wait for another supply force due to arrive in the last week of April.\(^3\)

A Confederate cavalry force captured a courier headed for Steele’s army with news of the latest supply train’s departure. Price acted quickly and decisively, and assembled a large ambush, which waylaid the Union column on April 24. The Union force was completely annihilated at a place called Marks’ Mills, on truly one of the darkest days for the Union effort in Arkansas. Over 1100 men involved on the Union side were killed, wounded or captured. The supply train was ambushed and surrounded in the middle of a river crossing. Steele did not find out
about the fiasco until a few days later, when the supply train was late and scouts reported finding the scene of dozens of burned wagons. Also, a few survivors straggled into Pine Bluff and Little Rock, spreading panic among those garrisons as well.\textsuperscript{4}

Steele’s subordinate officers met with him on April 25, when they almost unanimously voted to retreat to Little Rock. Steele wanted to hold the line of the Ouachita as long as possible, and his army occupied strong fortifications at Camden. The Confederates had constructed some previously, and his own forces strengthened them. But it would not be possible without supplies, and no more supply convoys could be sent from Little Rock or Pine Bluff, both critically low on supplies themselves. Another consideration was Steele’s own supply train, made up of overworked, underfed horses. They had to be saved for another campaign, but his army would be too slow in retreat if he tried to save them.\textsuperscript{5}

Steele decided to retreat, but not in the direction of Pine Bluff, which lay to the northeast. Instead, he wanted to destroy the bridges across the Ouachita River at Camden, and retreat directly north. This road was not as swampy as the Pine Bluff route, and there was more forage to be had for his starving animals. Most of the remaining Union supplies were destroyed, because the animals were too weak to transport them. Large amounts of munitions were left behind or thrown in the river, but what little food they had left was parcellled out to the Union troops. Steele made his retreat during the night of April 26. The rebels were not finished investing the Camden fortifications, and they had their cavalry scattered about in Steele’s rear,
unconcentrated. Therefore, it was a full two days before Kirby Smith crossed the Ouachita with his infantry and set out after Steele.6

Steele made the most of his thin advantage. He pushed his weary forces through the Rebel cavalry screens and reached the Saline River by April 29. But his column stretched out for ten miles behind him, and he would have to wait at least a day to get the bulk of his army across the Saline. His infantry took up positions protecting the crossing, and hoped the Confederates would not catch up. But Price and Kirby Smith marched their men hard and reached the crossing on the night of the 29th. The battle for Jenkin’s Ferry, the last large engagement fought in Arkansas during the war, took place the next day. The Confederate forces were repulsed by the thinnest of margins on the Saline riverbanks. Steele lost much of his livestock, but was able to withdraw most of his men across the Saline.7

Another cavalry raid on Steele’s forces frightened him into allowing 200 more wagons to be burned, for fear of capture. He continued to push his men, for he feared that Little Rock might fall if Kirby Smith could get his army into the Union rear. In actuality, Smith regrouped his exhausted army at Camden satisfied that Steele had been permanently repulsed from southern Arkansas. Steele’s advanced forces stumbled into the Little Rock perimeter on May 1, and the rest of the army arrived in the next few days.8

Steele cannot be held responsible for the failure of the campaign. He maintained good progress as long as his supplies held out. He did not have the option of foraging for supplies in a territory that had been stripped bare by retreating Confederates. Steele conducted an
orderly retreat back to Little Rock and managed to save his army. But he exacerbated his already poor supply situation by losing much of his livestock and wagons, commodities that were irreplaceable in war-ravaged Arkansas. Steele’s army would never again attempt an offensive movement as a whole; it was divided and detached for garrison duty or sent eastward to help General Sherman in Georgia. Arkansas Union regiments as a whole did not participate in the Camden campaign, although Unionists were used as guides. The southern half of Arkansas was not strong in Unionist sympathies anyway, and recruiting men in that area would have been difficult. Arkansas Federals were content to try and solidify their holds on other parts of the state.⁹

Even though the Union forces held Fort Smith and the surrounding territory in the west, it was still hard to tell who was in charge. Henry Halleck, the chief Union planner in Washington, committed an egregious error in dealing with Fort Smith. On January 1, 1864, Halleck named General Samuel Curtis commander of the Department of Kansas, and he included the post of Fort Smith and all of the Indian Territory in this department. Steele was to command the rest of the state under the Department of Arkansas. This arrangement was completely impractical. The forces which protected Fort Smith were technically part of Curtis’ Army of the Frontier, commanded by General James Blunt. However, these troops were dispersed between Waldron, Van Buren, Roseville, and Clarksville as approach stations for the protection of Fort Smith from guerrilla parties. These towns, as well as the town of Fort Smith, fell under Steele’s control. Only the fortifications of Fort Smith were under Curtis’s command.¹⁰
However, Curtis and Blunt both desired their powers to be expanded. Blunt fought openly with General James Thayer, one of Steele's subordinates sent to coordinate the Union forces in Western Arkansas. Thayer was ordered to Little Rock in anticipation of the Camden campaign in March, and he took most of Blunt's men with him. Blunt complained so loudly, and actually encouraged his men to desert Thayer's force and cross the line into Indian Territory, that even Curtis ordered him to keep quiet about the matter for the time being. Colonel William Judson, Thayer's replacement, strengthened the outer perimeter of Fort Smith, but was running low on supplies. Blunt actually controlled the flow of supplies to Fort Smith through the Indian Territory, and as long as this was the case, Judson would be starved out by his own side.11

Steele recognized the difficulties faced by Judson, and he uncharacteristically lobbied Grant and Halleck for permission to include all of Fort Smith in his department. Grant agreed, and Lincoln ordered Halleck to change the departmental boundary and sent Blunt back to Kansas for Curtis to deal with. With the situation cleared up, Judson tightened his grip on Western Arkansas, and the outposts surrounding Fort Smith were strengthened. Thayer continued on to Little Rock, and parts of the Army of the Frontier were absorbed by Steele and participated in the Camden campaign. Arkansas Unionists were present at all of the outposts in Western Arkansas, and almost a full regiment of Arkansans occupied Fort Smith itself. The Unionists had a large stake in the outcome of this political battle for Fort Smith, for if they had been used in operations in the Indian Territory
under General Blunt, their effectiveness would have been greatly diminished. In fact, it can be argued that the only way Arkansans could have been used effectively by the Federal leadership would have been within state boundaries.\(^\text{12}\)

Issac Murphy and his new administration in Little Rock faced enormous problems in trying to impose some order on the political chaos that reigned in Arkansas. Even though the turnout for the constitutional convention had been respectable considering the violent conditions, Murphy was well aware of the tenuous power his government exercised, and no serious accomplishments were made by his administration until March 14-16, 1864, when the old 1836 state constitution was ratified with only a few changes. Murphy was officially elected governor in this same election, which only saw 12,000 people turn out to vote. Previously, he had been appointed the provisional governor. Murphy’s inaugural address was bland and conciliatory, and very few concrete proposals were made. He called for all Confederate sympathizers to return to the Union, and asked all state citizens to help rebuild the state from the ravages of war.\(^\text{13}\)

Murphy’s speech may well have gone unnoticed by the large majority of Arkansans. The very existence of his government depended solely upon General Steele’s occupation forces in Little Rock. When Steele ventured south to Camden, and retreated in defeat back to the capital in May, Murphy’s government was dealt a serious blow. The state was half-occupied by active Confederate forces, while guerrillas roamed the remainder. With the treasury empty, and the only money in circulation being worthless Confederate specie, Steele’s defeat further increased
the isolation of Murphy's government, and increased Confederate
military activity on all sides of the capital.\textsuperscript{14}

Murphy's promise of "peace and security" was indeed a threat to
Confederate propagandists. They fully realized the horrors of war that
Arkansas had witnessed for three years, and the Union appeal for law
and order would hamper Confederate efforts at prolonging the war
through guerrilla operations, which many of the common people saw as
more threatening than Union occupation forces. Many Southern
sympathizers felt the Confederacy had written the state off after the
fall of Vicksburg, and General Kirby Smith wrote that the people
appeared "despondent and listless". It seemed the Unionists at least
possessed the momentum in appearing to care more about the future of
the state.\textsuperscript{15}

After the people of Little Rock went so far as to name a newly
established school in that town after General Steele, the Confederates
adopted a slogan of "no reunion" and "no reconstruction" in their
propaganda campaign. Rebel pamphleteers called the Murphy government a
group of men that, "fawn like dogs...most of whom are of baser sort,
drunkards, swindlers, and ignoramuses".\textsuperscript{16} Southern newspapers
accused the Federal troops of manipulating the voting process in early
1864 and urged people not to vote at all in the state government. They
accused Steele of promoting peace and security in Arkansas as only a
screen which masked the real goals of conquest. Confederate
authorities never grasped the idea that raids by Generals Shelby and
Price were not helping sway public opinion to their side. Instead,
they were driving neutral people under Union protection.\textsuperscript{17}
Some Union propaganda was launched at this time as well, emanating from Little Rock under the direction of J. William Demby. He published a windy and eloquent pamphlet beginning in May of 1864 after some prodding from Steele, who put up some of the funds for the project. The "Home Aegis and Monthly Review" was intended to be a monthly publication, but Demby only printed three issues before stopping. He later wrote a book published in 1865 about a Missouri Union soldier. Demby's "Home Aegis" strongly called for the overthrow of the rebellion in Arkansas, and it detailed the various terrors General Price and certain guerrilla groups were inflicting upon the state. It also related the activities of Arkansas delegates recently appointed to lobby for the Union state government, and the paper listed towns that could be centers for Union regimental recruitment. Finally, the "Home Aegis" provided a few 'sketches' of Union men, their various acts of heroism, and the activities of Arkansas Union regiments, especially successes against bushwackers. 18

In fact, not only were Confederate soldiers quitting their own army, a few made the decision to join the Union cause. Many men returned to their homes only to find smoking ruins, an indication guerrilla bands had wreaked havoc in the area. Angered by the atrocities that had been committed in their absence, these men usually chose one of two options: they either fled the state and moved to Texas or St. Louis, depending on what their sympathies were, or they organized into home guard units, usually created under the aegis of a local Union commander. These home guard units were never mustered in as official Union regiments, but if some men wanted to join an Arkansas Union regiment, that choice was always made available.
The recruitment of Arkansans to Union regiments began to increase in 1864, and a good example of this activity can be seen when examining the Second Arkansas Infantry. The impetus behind the organization of the regiment began back in 1863, when General John Schofield was still in power in Missouri. He had initially proposed Springfield, Missouri as a recruiting base, but when Fort Smith fell into Federal hands in late 1863, it became a more logical choice for a location to recruit. By January of 1864, the regiment progressed nicely, and by March, almost 900 men were enrolled. But the problems unique to Arkansas Federal regiments soon hampered the effective deployment of the Second Infantry Regiment. Steele wanted the entire regiment to accompany him on the Camden expedition, and the regiment was sent out before it had acquired arms and decent training. Consequently, in the first skirmish of the campaign, only 50 miles from Little Rock, the regiment disintegrated under fire, although they were well supported by other units. At the conclusion of the campaign, fully two-thirds of the Second Arkansas were listed as deserters, and it took the remainder of the year to refit the regiment. However, once the regiment was assigned to western Arkansas, the location from which many of its members came, the ranks began to swell with most of the men who had deserted earlier. In what must have been a rare situation, all the men who deserted were allowed to return with no punishment given them, except for loss of pay for the time they had not been with the regiment.19

Captain A.H. Ryan, formerly of the 17th Illinois Infantry, was able to find enough men in Little Rock to organize the Third Arkansas
Cavalry Regiment in February of 1864. Some men of the Third Arkansas Cavalry acted as scouts in Steele's Camden campaign and the rest of regiment was divided between outposts along the Arkansas River in the western part of the state. Ryan soon had his hands full fighting guerrilla bands who crossed and recrossed the Arkansas River, raiding with impunity. The initial task of the Third Arkansas was to hold the line of the river and not allow the passage of rebel bands across it. Later, the more ambitious project of stringing telegraph line from Fort Smith and Little Rock began, so that Steele could keep in touch with his newly acquired area of responsibility in the west. Ryan's men were sorely tested by this second job, failing to keep the line up for more than a few hours at a time. It was too vulnerable to destruction by guerrillas anywhere along its length.20

If prospective recruits had no yearning for the infantry, General Steele provided some worn-out horses for a cavalry regiment in the capital, which mustered in its first elements as the Fourth Arkansas Cavalry Regiment in January 1864. Gradually, the regiment built its strength up through 1864, recruiting solely in Little Rock. By the last day of the year, the Fourth Arkansas Cavalry reached its full complement of men, having mustered 12 companies of men. Most of these companies did not have enough horses, and the steeds available were unfit for cavalry duty. The Fourth Arkansas Cavalry was sent into the region occupied by Ryan's Third Arkansas Cavalry, while some detachments remained behind at the capital, performing various scouting and garrison duties. In the few engagements the Fourth Cavalry fought
in, they performed as well as could be expected for ill-armed, ill-trained cavalrymen.\textsuperscript{21}

A pitiful attempt began in Fort Smith in the spring of 1864 to raise what would become officially the Fourth Arkansas Infantry Regiment. No commanding officer for the regiment was named, but a few junior officers scoured the countryside for recruits. A few refugees from the Camden expedition were obtained, as well as over a hundred men from the western counties. The recruiting base was set up in Clarksville, where Ryan and elements of two other Arkansas units were located. However, recruiting went too slowly, and before the end of the year, the decision was made to break up the small number of men recruited and send some to the Fourth Arkansas Cavalry Regiment, while the rest were sent to the Second Arkansas Infantry.\textsuperscript{22}

This peculiar situation highlights the problems with using Arkansas Union regiments in long campaigns outside of their home areas. It was common for men to join the regiments when the recruiting officers could offer the promise of operating in familiar territory. Many men just wanted to protect themselves and their families. They had not bargained for long marches that took them farther away from home. The Arkansans’ conduct in the Camden campaign was not indicative of their war record overall. They fought well against guerrillas when stationed close to their homes, and obviously, their commanders were willing to take them back after a long absence with no questions asked.

One unit that defies comparison with other Arkansas Federal units was the Second Arkansas Cavalry. This unit had a variety of experiences that differed from other Arkansas units. The regiment
first formed out of the remnants of the old First Arkansas Infantry Battalion, the one Arkansas Federal unit stationed at Helena, Arkansas in the latter half of 1862. Once the battalion had been decimated by disease, the pitiful survivors were shipped to St. Louis, where they numbered less than 100. The Military Governor of Arkansas at that time, John S. Phelps, was also recuperating in St. Louis, and he discovered the remnants of what once was an ambitious project. Before he was relieved of duty by President Lincoln, he arranged for the hundred Arkansans to be the nucleus of a new regiment, tentatively named the Second Arkansas Cavalry.23

By pure coincidence, a man named John E. Phelps was assigned to command this regimental fragment when it was sent to Springfield to begin a new round of recruiting. There was no relation between the two men, but Phelps faced a difficult task even without the help of patronage. By August of 1863, the Second Arkansas Cavalry still numbered only 300 strong, but Phelps was able to raid into northern Arkansas and pull out Union men who were willing to join the regiment. Sentiment was especially strong in Independence County, where Curtis had recruited the oldest members in the regiment in 1862, before abandoning the area to rebel forces. The remaining Unionists there joined Phelps' cavalry, ready to take revenge on Southern guerrillas.24

By the end of the war, the Second Arkansas Cavalry regiment had compiled the longest and most prestigious record of any other Arkansas regiment. Fully mustered in March of 1864, they single-handedly patrolled the area between Fayetteville and Batesville, because no
other regiment dared make the long journey alone. Because they roamed in between the two outposts, Colonel Phelps often ended his dispatches with the single location: "in the field." The regiment was surprised only once, in an ambush in the summer of 1864. Once the Second Arkansas Cavalry had established itself as the finest counter-guerrilla regiment in northern Arkansas, they gained true battlefield experience in the campaign to catch General Sterling Price as he raided Missouri in the fall of 1864. They were the only Arkansas regiment to participate in the campaign from start to finish. Once this task ended, the regiment further distinguished itself as the only Arkansas Union regiment to be stationed outside the state for any extended period of time, being sent to Memphis in January of 1865, where they captured over 200 rebel guerrillas on raids into northern Mississippi.

Truly, the Second Arkansas Cavalry differed from other Arkansas regiments in that they had a glittering reputation, but they were unique in other ways as well. The regiment was founded around a dedicated base of ideologues, recruited in the early states of the war in Arkansas. These men were willing to leave their homes for the duration of the war, and fight for a cause which they believed in from the beginning. Finally, Colonel Phelps proved to be a dynamic leader in battle, and he was certainly an unabashed promoter of the regiment’s reputation. He acquired semi-autonomous status, having to answer to no commanding officer in particular for most of 1864. He drew his supplies from either Fayetteville, Batesville, or foraged supplies from known Confederate sympathizers. Not until Price’s raid
did he lose some of his freedom of movement, and by then his force had gained the reputation as a regiment of battle-tested veterans, which they were. It is to be sure that no other Arkansas Union regiment enjoyed the advantages that the Second Arkansas had, and this ultimately showed in the overall record of those regiments.²⁸

While most Union troops worked hard to fortify their garrisons during the summer of 1864, the Confederates seized the initiative by adopting a bold plan proposed by General Sterling Price. The Northern forces were content to hold what ground they had gained, so Price reasoned they would not expect a massive raid into Missouri. It was nearing election time for Lincoln’s second term, and Price also had been informed of significant support in Missouri for the Southern cause. He believed Missourians would flock to his banner if he reentered the state, having grown weary of the Union occupation.²⁹

Price was correct in thinking the Northern forces would be surprised. He sent General Jo Shelby ahead with a cavalry force into northern Arkansas to begin recruiting in May. This move spread panic in Little Rock, prompting Governor Murphy to write to Lincoln that, "Little Rock is threatened. Unless help comes now, all will be lost."³⁰ Murphy overreacted a bit, because the capital was not the objective of the rebels. Shelby crossed the Arkansas River easily and turned his attention to cutting the telegraph line. He then captured Dardanelle, an outpost held by elements of the Third Arkansas Cavalry. Colonel A.H. Ryan retreated in disorder toward Fort Smith, and Union families fled the vicinity.³¹
Shelby was not commanding bushwackers, because he felt they lowered discipline in his ranks. But Price had told him to contact the various guerrilla captains in northern Arkansas, and try and increase his forces in advance of Price’s movement. Shelby was not particularly successful in this area. He forcibly impressed a few men from northern Arkansas who later deserted his force in Missouri. The guerrilla captains all wished to join Shelby on the raid, but they also maintained their autonomy. If a guerrilla band did not wish to participate in a battle, they usually excused themselves from the action, by going off and pillaging the countryside. This alternately helped and hurt Price. The guerrilla forces acted as excellent cavalry scouts, but the neutral residents of Arkansas and Missouri despised them for their atrocities. Guerrillas hurt Price’s recruiting, but any force was a welcome addition to his army in May.32

For all of their knowledge about the Arkansas countryside, Ryan’s scouts could not quite locate Shelby’s force after it crossed the river. It is clear no one really wanted to engage Shelby, including General Steele in Little Rock. Most Union posts were too well fortified to be attacked, but the Unionists had to abandon Batesville, the location of many loyal families. The Northern force had been stationed there for six months, but when Shelby came into the area, they retreated, escorting over 200 Union families to Little Rock. Shelby’s force was large enough to prevent his being attacked by lone Union regiments, although the Second Arkansas Cavalry made a few attempts to snipe around the edges of Shelby’s units. In fact, Colonel Phelps fought no fewer than six small engagements with Shelby’s columns
during that summer, with both sides jockeying for position in the
mountains of central Arkansas.\textsuperscript{33}

Price finally readied his men for the advance in the autumn, and he
crossed the Arkansas River in September at almost the same place Shelby
picked. Instead of detouring to wipe up isolated Union garrisons,
Price had one objective, and that was St. Louis. The Confederates had
assembled 12,000 men, but only two-thirds were armed. Half of the
force was mounted however, which helped Price outrun the slow-footed
pursuit columns of Steele emanating from Little Rock. However, Price
met an obstinate Union force at Pilot Knob, Missouri on September
27th. He won the battle, but had been delayed long enough for
reinforcements to reach St. Louis. In fact, Rosecrans was mobilizing
quickly, scratching together two forces which to catch Price with. One
force would stay in front of Price, attempting to slow the Confederates
down. The other force was primarily cavalry, led by General Alfred
Pleasanton, a hard-bitten veteran of Gettysburg. Both Union forces
were smaller than Price’s, but Pleasanton’s force would be a dangerous
menace to Price’s rear.\textsuperscript{34}

The Confederates turned their attention to Jefferson City and the
other Missouri River towns. Price reinstalled Confederate Governor
Thomas Reynolds, but was unable to secure a capital for him, because
Pleasanton beat him to Jefferson City. Price moved quickly up the
Missouri, not finding many takers for his recruiting parties. As he
approached Lexington, scene of his victory in late 1861, Price began to
realize that his campaign would be a failure. General Curtis, exiled
to Kansas after political clashes with his superiors, gained another
chance to redeem his reputation and organized a third force to try and pin down Price. Curtis attempted to stop the Confederates on two different occasions east of Kansas City, but his force was made up of Kansas militia, not regulars. Shelby's detachment easily pushed Curtis back, and Price made plans to defeat Curtis and Pleasanton in detail. Such a victory could redeem the campaign, and swing the momentum in favor of the South.\textsuperscript{35}

The Second Arkansas Cavalry rode around Price's army and attached itself to Curtis' force at Kansas City. Fighting with that army, they performed admirably, but only in small actions. On October 23, they were held out of the largest battle west of the Mississippi River at Westport, just outside Kansas City. Instead of defeating both Union forces, Price was squeezed instead by Curtis and Pleasanton. Price's army was badly whipped, and retreated in disorder toward Arkansas. But the campaign was not over. It was still possible that Price's army, now racked by desertion and hunger, could be surrounded and eliminated. All Union forces were mobilized for this effort, including the First Arkansas Cavalry still stationed at Fayetteville, under Colonel LaRue Harrison.\textsuperscript{36}

Harrison's force had been preoccupied with fighting bushwackers for most of 1864, but Price's retreat presented him with a prime opportunity for glory. However, Harrison's Arkansans were still outnumbered by Price's army. Curtis continued to drive the rebels southward, and the best Harrison could do was fortify Fayetteville. Price was in no mood for more fighting, but he besieged the town and hoped for a quick capitulation. Price gave up this idea after seeing
the resolute fight that Harrison’s regiment put up behind their breastworks. The Confederate army resumed its march south the next day, with Union forces hot on their heels. Harrison’s force then picked up the pursuit in place of Curtis’ weary army, and by mid-November, Price retreated across the Arkansas River, west of Fort Smith. The garrison there had also been given a scare, but the fortifications at Fort Smith were even stronger than those at Fayetteville. Price’s army did not stop retreating until it reached the southernmost area of Arkansas, near the Texas border. The Confederates had lost over half of their force, and certainly this would be the last great offensive that they would undertake in the war.37

While Arkansas Federals did not distinguish themselves in this campaign, neither did Union forces from any other state. Rosecrans was replaced by Lincoln, and Curtis resigned, citing health reasons. The Departments of Kansas and Missouri were combined under the leadership of General Grenville Dodge, veteran of Pea Ridge and friend of General William T. Sherman, who led the Union forces in the west at this point. The Third Arkansas Cavalry, under Colonel Ryan and Phelps’ Second Arkansas Cavalry both mopped up the deserters from Price’s army, and both performed this duty competently into 1865. Harrison’s First Arkansas Cavalry saw little activity in 1864 until the Price invasion of Missouri, but the entire Southern campaign seemed to embolden the guerrillas in northern Arkansas, and Harrison fought these bands vigorously. Price momentarily besieged Fayetteville, but as mentioned
previously, Harrison was able to stave off disaster and Price fled again after Curtis moved to the support of Fayetteville.\textsuperscript{38}

The last stages of the campaign had the greatest importance for Arkansas Federals. Their original recruiting center, Fayetteville, had been successfully defended by Arkansas Unionists alone for almost ten days, and Arkansas Unionists claimed, with some justification, that they alone started and ended Price’s campaign. Ryan’s Third Arkansas had been the first to fight Shelby back in the summer of 1864, and Harrison watered his horses in the Arkansas after chasing Price to the Indian Territory. These actions were morale builders for the Unionist cause. While these successes did not spur recruiting, they did stem the flow of deserters from home guard and Arkansas Federal units.\textsuperscript{39}

Harrison’s First Arkansas Cavalry had become particularly adept in anti-guerrilla operations by the end of 1864. The regiment was still stationed in its entirety at Fayetteville, while some of the other Arkansas units were strung out among several outposts in their home areas. This increased the effectiveness of the regiment, as well as giving the residents of the region a close acquaintance with Colonel Harrison. The men of the First Arkansas Cavalry had an intimate knowledge of the location of Confederate sympathizers in their area, and where they liked to set up ambushes of supply trains. One of Harrison’s favorite tactics was to burn primitive grist mills that were constructed by guerrillas to feed themselves. He received complaints from civilians that the destruction of these mills was ruining the chances of farmers feeding themselves, but Harrison knew where the loyalties of each farmer lay in northwest Arkansas by this time, and he
knew no Union men held an interest in the mills. Most Union families had already moved to Fayetteville in the previous year, or north to Springfield. A steady stream of Union families continued from the south, most originating from Fort Smith and the Arkansas River valley. It was generally safer to flee the war by moving through northwest Arkansas, because Harrison was able to provide escorts for the refugee trains that went through his territory. The same assurances could not be given for those people moving north in the eastern part of Arkansas.  

The government did attempt to run some abandoned cotton plantations in eastern Arkansas in 1864, and many of the slaves that came into the Little Rock perimeter were sent to these plantations to work. They were allowed to take their families with them, if they had any, and occasionally troops from east of the Mississippi patrolled these plantations to cut down on guerrilla activity. This experiment in restarting the plantations was not very successful; the Murphy government in Little Rock was able to purchase more cotton from loyal white farmers and confiscate the rest of what it shipped north.

While many people had not actively supported the Union cause in Arkansas before 1864, most Confederates resigned themselves to defeat and took loyalty oaths by the end of the year. The failure of Price’s army in Missouri hastened this trend. Most areas of Arkansas were completely devastated by late 1864, and the only way that people could feed themselves was to declare their intentions in favor of the North. Most Union garrisons had supplies enough to entice the local populace into submitting, which had a snowball effect. When the local neutral
farmers stopped supporting guerrillas with covert aid, this helped enforce law and order in the countryside, which made the Union authorities seem more powerful.

In fact, one author has contended that the people did not take loyalty oaths because they believed in the Union cause. Rather, these "survival lies" enabled most farmers to stay on their land and elude the wrath of both Union and Confederate patrols, which constantly kept tabs on their actions. When a local Union commander questioned a farmer about his loyalty, the farmer always avowed his alliance with the North. The opposite statement was always elicited by the local Confederate guerrilla leader. Most people still living in the countryside in Arkansas at this time were probably allied closely to neither side. To many, an open statement of loyalty was equivalent to signing one's own death warrant. Men who initially had Unionist sympathies had often been enticed into announcing their loyalty publicly, and then when Union forces moved out of their area, the Unionist civilians had to move with them or risk loss of property and/or death. Only in the permanent Union garrisons in Arkansas could strong Union sympathies be found, because the people were generally protected. Beyond a certain distance from these strongholds, even Little Rock, few if any avowed Unionists were to be found.

However, some men had lost their families and property while fighting in Union regiments, and these unfortunate incidents provided them with one motivation to keep fighting: revenge. This motive was obviously the impetus behind the formation of many home guard units. These units were more similar to vigilante bands than military
organizations. They could only fulfill a few worthwhile material functions, being poorly armed and led. Many of these bands contained ex-Confederates who had not yet taken the loyalty oath, but had deserted their respective Southern units. The men in these bands had returned home and encountered disorder and lawless banditti roaming the countryside disguised as guerrillas. The only effective protection the neutral citizens had was to resort to home guard units for protection.45

Steele and the subordinate Arkansas Unionist commanders tried to incorporate these units into their defense system, but the home guard units resisted, which indicated the presence of unrepentant Confederates. Most Union commanders allowed them to operate on their own, reasoning that if they were no longer fighting for the Confederacy, they would not impede Union control of the state. Some home guard units did draw weapons from Steele at Little Rock, after taking loyalty oaths. However, most of these units survived on what weaponry they had been able to bring home from the rebel army, or what they took from guerrillas.

A trend emerged in November 1864 that continued until the end of the war. Men deserted in droves from Price’s army as it fled southward, and General Kirby Smith’s army shrank as it slowly starved from lack of supplies at Camden. These deserters roamed the countryside in groups of ten to a hundred men, answering to no authority except their own. They presented no real danger to the Union garrisons, but they created great problems in keeping supply and communication lines open. These small bands also terrorized local
citizens, whatever loyalty these people professed. The Arkansas Union troops made quick work of these bandits, which never stood to fight. When they did, they were always killed or captured. A large number of them were paroled, while a hard core of the leaders of these bands were either hanged or interred in Little Rock. Yet they continued to be a thorn in the side of Union authorities, even with the tacit cooperation of the scattered home guard units.46

The situation stabilized politically in Arkansas in 1864, and the last great battles were fought in the theater. Most Union outposts reduced their activity heading into the winter of 1864, for the weather was particularly harsh and organized rebel resistance was located too far south to be of any consequence. While no considerable gains were made anywhere in the state during the year, no ground had been lost either, and this might have been all that the Unionists needed to do. Arkansas was suffering from war-weariness throughout all sections of the state, and the next year would see the beginning of the reconstruction of the state in an economic sense. Issac Murphy’s government had survived its first year, and while no great gains were made politically, just surviving was an accomplishment for the embattled governor.
FOOTNOTES


3Steele to Banks, April 23, 1864, O.R., Volume 34, Part III, pp. 267-68. Steele had, however, given up any hope of driving farther south into Louisiana.

4Clayton to Green, April 23, 1864, O.R., Volume 34, Part I, p. 665.

5Bearss, Jenkins' Ferry, pp. 87-89.


7Bearss, Jenkins' Ferry, pp. 161-162. The Confederates made the mistake of committing their units piecemeal into a sunken road leading to the ferry.

8Ibid., pp. 171-175.


12Halleck to Grant, April 15, 1864, O.R., Volume 34, Part III, p. 161.

the war. It seems that he was disturbed particularly about many sentries on the Little Rock defense perimeter that could neither read nor write.

14Ibid.

15Robert F. Smith, Confederate Attempts to Influence Public Opinion in Arkansas, 1861-1865, (Ph.D. Diss., University of Arkansas, 1953), p. 84; Fort Smith New Era, April 23, 1864. This Unionist newspaper capitalized on the Confederate discouragement, printing such songs as "When This Cruel War Is Over".

16Smith, Public Opinion, pp. 85, 87; Washington Telegraph, February 3, 1864. Life in the occupied counties was often described, with tales of "insolent Negroes running loose in the countryside".

17Smith, Public Opinion, p. 87.

18James William Demby, The Home Aegis and Monthly Review, (Little Rock: Equis Print., 1864). It is certain that the circulation of the pamphlet was not statewide, but it probably made its way into many parts of northern Arkansas. Plans were made to reprint the first three editions in August of 1864.


22Ibid. p. 250.

23Ibid. p. 94.

24Sanborn to Phelps, April 11, 1864, O.R., Volume 34, Part III, p. 137.


26A.A.G. Report, p. 95.

27Ibid. The first recruits were able to convince others, (usually relatives) from their same home area, to join the regiment.

28Ibid., p. 94. How he came upon horses for his men is still somewhat of a mystery, though he probably had connections with the quartermaster in Springfield to begin with, and he was able to use the mounts he captured from his bushwacker enemies.

Murphy to Lincoln, May 12, 1864, O.R., Volume 34, Part III, p. 559.


Western Border, pp. 334-341.


Bearss, Fort Smith, pp. 291-292.

Ibid., pp. 290-291.

Michael Fellman, Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 49-52. The same conclusions Fellman makes about Missouri can be generally extended to include Arkansas.

Ibid., p. 118.

Ibid., pp. 137, 260-262.

Ibid., pp. 120-129. Occasional beheadings of guerrilla chieftains were common in Missouri, and people traveled from miles around to witness the event. Fellman speculates that the public execution of some of these bandits was a mass catharsis for the Union men and their families.
CHAPTER V

"LET US MAKE WAR ON GUERRILLAS, NOT WOMEN AND CHILDREN"

Unionism in Arkansas by the end of 1864 was growing in strength. More areas came under the influence of the Federal troops, and more Arkansans took the oath. Despite this progress, Northern authorities decided that more important areas needed their attention, and this meant that the year of 1865 would bring changes to Arkansas, not all of them good for the Union cause. On November 25, 1864, General Frederick Steele was relieved as the commander of the Department of Arkansas. His ouster had taken months, but many soldiers in Washington felt it was deserved because of Steele’s failure to prevent Price from going on his raid in the autumn of 1864. In truth, Steele had no way of stopping Price’s army from moving north, because he did not have enough men to guard the line of the Arkansas River and prevent the crossing of rebel forces. The best Steele could have done was to warn Rosecrans in Missouri that Price was moving, which is what he did. It also did not help Steele’s cause that the Camden campaign was a failure.¹

However, Governor Isaac Murphy was determined to fight Lincoln’s wishes in this matter, and he was backed by most of the Unionists in the state. The mayor of Little Rock, C.P. Bertrand, stated in a letter
to Lincoln that, (General Steele) has performed much labor in this department. He conquered Arkansas, established a state government, and put territory in...a state of defense." The fears of many Unionists were echoed by Bertrand when he ended, "Mark what I say: all that has been gained will be lost. Steele is the most popular man, by far odds, that we have in the state."  

Regardless of Steele's accomplishments, Lincoln replaced him with General Joseph Reynolds, a man who commanded a division at the battle of Chickamauga, and who organized the defenses of New Orleans in 1864. Reynolds' war record was not overly impressive, and unfortunately, he did not have a good feel for the delicate political situation in Arkansas. Reynolds was a trusted subordinate of General Edward S. Canby, commander of the Military Division of West Mississippi, which included the Department of Arkansas. Canby assigned Reynolds to Arkansas because his battlefield record was less than sterling, while Steele's was marginally better. With Steele commanding Reynolds' old division, it was hoped that progress could be made on capturing Mobile, Alabama.  

Reynolds was not received enthusiastically in Arkansas, and he did nothing to improve the situation after arriving in Little Rock. Canby constantly pressured Reynolds to send troops out of Arkansas to Memphis and New Orleans, which he dutifully did. In exchange for these, it is unclear what Reynolds expected in return, possibly a promotion back to
the fighting near Mobile. But this was not to be the case. Reynolds sat in Little Rock the remainder of the war, steadily sending more and more Union troops out of the state. In late March, General John Pope was given command over Arkansas instead of Canby, and this further distanced Reynolds from the possibility of promotion. Pope allowed Reynolds to stay in command, since the war was almost over.⁵

What all of this meant for Arkansas was fairly clear to most Unionists from the beginning. A large meeting was held in Little Rock on December 8, in which several resolutions were passed and sent to Lincoln. Reynolds arrived in the midst of all of the protest, and the crowd was not glad to see Steele turn command over on December 22, 1864. There were also rumors that certain parts of Arkansas were to be abandoned in order to strip the state bare of troops, and these rumors were realized when it was announced that Fort Smith and the western parts of Arkansas were to be evacuated in January.⁶

The Confederates viewed all of the activity in Little Rock with glee. Their prospects for taking back the state had been grim after Price’s defeat, but when Reynolds and Canby decided to give up nearly half of the state, the rebels were incredulous. So were the Unionists in Arkansas for that matter, because their worst fears were being realized. All that Steele and the Unionists accomplished in Arkansas was being thrown away for a chance at career advancement.⁷ In the same letter of November 25 to President Lincoln, Mayor Bertrand pointed out that the area of Fort Smith and the western counties comprised one entire congressional district, and part of another, filled with people who had voted for Lincoln in the past election. In a rather blunt
manner, Bertrand stated, "This comes from putting in place men who are ignorant of the country."\(^8\)

Colonel La Rue Harrison in Fayetteville protested also. He wrote to General Grenville Dodge (commander of Missouri) in late December in an attempt to lobby on behalf of northwest Arkansas. Harrison warned that leaving the Unionists in western Arkansas to the tender mercies of rebel guerrillas would be the most inhumane act that the Union had ever set in motion in Arkansas.\(^9\) General John Thayer, commander at Fort Smith, had the best knowledge of the situation. He explained that there were hundreds of refugees clustered around Fort Smith, and most of them possessed no means of going with the army when it pulled out. "Humanity demanded" that the Union provide them a way to leave the area. Thayer wrote, "Those who are not killed outright will be robbed of their subsistence, and in a short time will be in an actual state of starvation."\(^10\)

The commanders in western Arkansas, Thayer and Harrison, began to delay as much as they could. Harrison sent telegrams to Little Rock, telling of rumors that Grant had already overruled the decision to evacuate the area. Harrison did this at least three different times. He also lobbied hard with anyone in Missouri that would listen, especially Dodge, who was a friend of Lincoln’s. Thayer announced that he would obey Reynolds and leave, but it would take months to get everything ready. Boats would have to be sent up the river, supplies would have to be transferred or destroyed, and provisions would have to be made for dismantling the fortifications that were constructed in the past two years. Finally, the refugees had to be moved to places of
safety. Reynolds anticipated the stalling tactics used by Thayer, and he ordered a large number of boats to Fort Smith before Thayer's protectors reached Little Rock. By January 1, Thayer only had a handful of men left in Fort Smith, with most of the supplies already evacuated.11

What Reynolds did not anticipate was the intervention of General Ulysses S. Grant into the issue. Grant realized the importance of Fort Smith in controlling matters in the Indian Territory, and he overruled Canby on January 1. Halleck and Lincoln concurred with Grant's decision, and Thayer was duly informed on the same day. The Union troops were turned around at Lewisburg, halfway to Little Rock, and sent westward again.12 By the next day, Fort Smith was again safe in Union hands. There is no record of Canby's feelings on the issue, but Reynolds issued a scathing defense of the original order. He wrote, "The garrison of Fort Smith cannot and have not afforded protection to citizens outside the lines....the War Department will not be able to count upon these garrisons for anything. They are a dead weight upon this department. They have been sustained at enormous cost, but will be reoccupied and held."13

Reynolds felt that Fort Smith was a drain on his resources, but the outpost actually drew on three different supply routes to meet its needs. Not only did Reynolds have to send steamers up the Arkansas from Little Rock, but Fort Smith drew supplies in more limited amounts from Fort Scott in Kansas and from Springfield, Missouri, by way of Fayetteville. However, Reynolds still exercised some control over the situation in western Arkansas, and in a slightly vindictive mood, he removed Thayer from command of Fort Smith on February 6. Thayer was
sent to the delta region of Arkansas, where he commanded only one regiment the rest of the war. Reynolds also scaled back Fort Smith’s garrison to a dangerously low level. There were only 1800 effectives at the fort, reduced from a previous level of over 6000.\textsuperscript{14}

The removal of Thayer might have been a wise move as far as Arkansas Federals were concerned. Several Kansas regiments had been stationed at Fort Smith for almost two years, most of them coming to the area when General John Blunt captured the post in the summer of 1863. These Kansas regiments caused great hardship amongst the civilian community of Van Buren, neighboring the fort. The Kansas men would take any cattle and horses they found from civilians, whether Unionist or not, and rarely issued receipts for these animals. Then, Kansas speculators would drive the livestock taken from Arkansans into Fort Scott, and sell it at tremendous profit. Thayer turned a blind eye to this smuggling, even though local Unionists complained loudly.\textsuperscript{15}

When Thayer was replaced by Reynolds, the Arkansas Federals believed the situation would improve dramatically. General Cyrus Bussey was appointed the new commander, and he was a man of action. The Unionists soon gained the allegiance of Bussey to their cause, which he firmly supported. Bussey had been stationed at Fort Smith less than one month when he asked Reynolds to send a full regiment to the post. It seems that there was a shortage of qualified staff officers to be found in Fort Smith. Most of the officers there were involved in allegations of smuggling or cooperating with the rebels in some fashion. Western Arkansas benefitted from the fact that Bussey
and Reynolds were on good terms with each other. Reynolds not only sent the Fortieth Iowa Infantry to Fort Smith, complete with good officers, he also reassigned all of the Kansas regiments to east of the Mississippi River, into Canby’s armies at New Orleans and Memphis.¹⁶

Bussey now had a solid base from which to reconstruct the western counties, but his supplies were constantly low. Reynolds only sent an occasional steamer to Fort Smith, and he never did send supplies for the civilian populace. Many of the merchants at Fort Smith had ordered supplies from St. Louis the previous year, but it was impossible to get them delivered without the aid of steamboats on the Arkansas River, which Reynolds controlled.¹⁷ The number of refugees at Fort Smith continued to grow throughout the winter, until Bussey wrote, "There are several thousand families...nearly all have been robbed, and are now destitute."¹⁸ These families were at Fort Smith because the men had enlisted in the Arkansas Union regiments stationed there, namely the First Arkansas Infantry, the Second Arkansas Infantry, and elements of the First and Second Arkansas Cavalry regiments. None of these men had been paid in quite a while, and their families were starving as a result.

These Union families could not protect themselves at long distances from Fort Smith, so they had journeyed there in search of food and protection. The refugees couldn’t leave without transportation, and only a few were being sent away to Springfield, whenever wagons became available. Since local merchants could not provide enough food, Bussey asked permission to sell food to the refugees at cost, from the post commissary. Reynolds gave permission, but the goods would have to be
subtracted from what was owed the Arkansas Federal troops. This arrangement seemed agreeable to everyone, as long as the supplies in the commissary at Fort Smith held out.  

Bussey also noted that there were several groups of families that intended to set up colonies outside Fort Smith on prime farmland that had been abandoned early in the war. Most of these farms were owned by Confederates, who already had moved south to Texas in 1863. These colonies also wanted to raise a home guard unit to protect each outpost, hopefully to be armed with existing stores from Fort Smith. The colony idea caught on quickly in western Arkansas in the spring of 1865. Many of the Union commanders worried that the home guard units would not be able to protect themselves, but the entire plan was generally well accepted. The civilians could possibly raise crops with a minimum investment by the Union military in old muskets and seeds for planting, while lessening the dependence of the local population on daily patrols in the countryside.

Reynolds was not particularly fond of home guard units, but he was even less enchanted with the number of refugees in Little Rock. There were a few home guard units on the north side of the Arkansas River, but these units were small and of little consequence. However, Reynolds had been sending refugees out of the state as quickly as possible, using steamboats for this purpose. He further cut the number of Unionists refugees in Little Rock by calling for everyone to take an amnesty oath, in order to receive aid. Reynolds believed, probably correctly, that some rebel sympathizers were receiving Federal aid in food and clothing. Records were established to keep track of those
taking the oath. If anyone refused, they were to be escorted to the
Confederate lines near Camden. There is no record of how many took the
oath, but the number of refugees coming to Little Rock did not decrease
in 1865.20

In late February, Governor Murphy received a letter from a refugee
living in Springfield, Missouri, named James Orr. Orr had been
appointed by a group of people who previously lived in the north-
central counties of Arkansas, namely Marion, Searcy, Newton, and
Carroll counties. He petitioned Murphy for aid in equipping a home
guard company for each county mentioned. Orr explained that over 200
Union families had been living in Springfield for a considerable time,
and they now felt it was time to go and reclaim their old lands, if the
Union government would only support them. General Sanborn, commanding
the forces in southwest Missouri, endorsed Orr’s request, telling
Reynolds that he had enough smoothbore muskets in Springfield to outfit
these home guard units. The four companies were to enlist for a period
of twelve months, but Orr promised they would fight longer if the need
arose.21

Reynolds assented to supplying Sanborn’s refugees with old weapons,
but he strictly cautioned that Sanborn would not be able to send
patrols into northern Arkansas on a regular basis to help these
people. Sanborn obviously desired to help these Arkansans, if only to
relieve himself of the responsibility of protecting them. By the time
Sanborn received permission to recruit and muster these four home guard
companies, another controversy arose. General Bussey wrote a heated
message to Colonel Harrison, accusing him of letting his troops commit
depredations in the areas east of Fayetteville, namely, the counties that the newest home guard companies were being sent into. Bussey wrote, "Madison and Carroll counties are specially named as the scene of these outrages." If James Orr is to be believed, then there were no Unionists living in either one of those counties. They were still at Springfield, organizing to move into the area in March.

Harrison's reply to these accusations is unknown. Also, Bussey was informed of the alleged depredations by an unknown source. If the source was a rebel guerrilla, then Harrison's actions can be defended. Guerrilla captains often communicated with Harrison and Thayer before Bussey arrived, and in these letters they deplored Harrison's tactics of mill-burning. If they complained of depredations, these burnings were probably at the expense of Confederate families still in the area, not Unionists. If fact, the only regiment stationed at Fayetteville was the First Arkansas Union Infantry, a regiment made up of stalwart Federals, first recruited in 1862. It is extremely unlikely that men from this regiment would be committing depredations upon people allied with their cause. In truth, Harrison may have felt that he did not need to defend himself against these accusations.

Bussey informed Reynolds in March of the supposed devastation Harrison's men were committing. The commander in Little Rock responded by trying to halt the recruitment of any new home guard units in the Fayetteville area, unless authorized by himself or Bussey. This move may have been in the belief that the home guard units, not the First Arkansas Cavalry, had been causing disorder in northern Arkansas. But as shown previously, the new units in Springfield had not been given
enough time to even reach the area in question. However, Harrison continued to outfit new home guard units, without worrying much about whose permission he needed.  

The colony system was most popular in the Fayetteville area of northwest Arkansas. The number of refugees in that city had always been desirous of an opportunity to return to their homes. The men of the First Arkansas Cavalry were especially anxious to aid their families in raising crops during 1865. Harrison provided the opportunity at the earliest possible moment, and organized three meetings in the westernmost counties of Arkansas. These meetings were attended by a total of about 1700 men, all eager to move to newly established colonies. Harrison clearly studied the situation at length, proposing blockhouses be built for every colony -- without these forts colonies would not be given permission to start up -- and naming captains for each colony from the First Arkansas Cavalry, making sure men with military experience were in control of the colonies. This last provision also ensured that the home guard captains would be loyal to Harrison, and more likely to cooperate with the forces in Fayetteville in times of trouble.  

In a letter sent to Governor Murphy on March 15, Harrison gave the dispositions of sixteen colonies that had been organized. Half of the colonies already possessed blockhouses, and most were armed as well. At least one colony, that at Huntsville, benefitted from the protection of a veteran company of home guards. Harrison wrote that, "About forty of them are kept in the field as rangers and have done excellent service." Four of the colonies were only partially enrolled, but
Harrison believed that each of the remaining four would be filled and organized by the time planting arrived.

Bussey was informed of the ambitious number of colonies that Harrison allowed to organize, and he was not comfortable with such a large number of civilians being sent back into the countryside. He feared especially for the Bentonville colony, because it lay thirty miles north of Fayetteville, too far to be protected from that post. Harrison assured Bussey that there were no guerrilla bands numbering larger than 100 men in the area, and scouts had already located the position of those rebels. However, Bussey felt that it would be better for the Unionists not to plant crops at all in the coming spring, rather than have the fruits of their labor taken from them by Confederate soldiers.27 It is probable that Bussey could have established an equal number of colonies, maybe more, if he had been more willing to allow home guard companies to be raised. There was only one colony in existence near Fort Smith, which was the large colony of Van Buren. There was also ample protection that could be provided by Fort Smith, which was only two miles away from the colony. Another colony could have been started at Clarksville, thirty miles down the river, but Bussey would not allow it. In fact, the post at Clarksville was abandoned after only being in existence three months. Most of the Unionists there, numbering nearly 200 families, moved to Lewisburg or Fort Smith after they were denied permission to settle.28
Bussey continued to send messages to Harrison throughout March, discouraging the colony system, but there is no indication that Harrison gave up. Bussey never took permission away from Harrison to continue to send people out into the country, but he wrote, "I believe the colony system impractical."29 This message was contradictory in many ways. Bussey told Harrison that he was not responsible for sending scouts to each of the colonies for added protection. The home guard companies were to be the only means of protection if people wanted to return to their homes. But later in the same message, Bussey told Harrison to protect the people "in their homes". Since there were few people in the city of Fayetteville at the time, he must have been referring to the countryside, so it is unclear what Bussey meant.30

In any case, Harrison continued to be positive about the progress in northwest Arkansas. There is no record of his answer to Bussey, but in a letter to Sanborn at the end of March, Harrison wrote, "I find General Bussey the right kind of man, working for the people and to put down rogues."31 He also asked for a visit by Sanborn to the area, and public notice to be made of the fact that the colonies were prospering. By the end of March, all the colonies in northwest Arkansas had fortifications, and twelve of the sixteen were well armed. The number of Unionists in the colonies increased to 1200 men. Harrison estimated that no less than 15,000 acres would be cultivated by the colonies in the spring.32

Another encouraging sign was the number of rebels that were surrendering to Union outposts. Harrison and Bussey both reported rebels in small numbers were coming in to take the oath and receive
food. Also, guerrilla bands around Little Rock were shrinking, and the number of sympathizers in the country around Pine Bluff was also decreasing. The guerrilla bands were losing their means of support, therefore having to stay closer to Camden for supplies. When General Robert E. Lee surrendered on April 9 to General Grant, the number of repentant rebels steadily increased. However, General E. Kirby Smith, the commander of Confederate forces west of the Mississippi River, vowed to hold out until the whereabouts of President Jefferson Davis were known. Smith confidently asserted that he commanded over 50,000 troops that were well armed and eager to fight. This was not the case as he discovered, when by the end of May Smith was a general without an army. Most of the Confederate soldiers left Camden with their horses and weapons, and looked for the nearest Union patrol to take their oaths. The outpost of Benton, Arkansas, twenty miles south of Little Rock, reported being overwhelmed by rebels wanting to surrender. Smith realized he was finished, and bowed to the inevitable when he surrendered on May 30. Another rebel force numbering 7,454 men also surrendered, located in the swamps of northeast Arkansas. After May 30th, the only rebel forces in Arkansas were unorganized bandits and a few guerrillas, which were hunted down and captured by the end of the summer. Most ex-Confederates joined their Union neighbors in trying to bring in a crop in the summer of 1865. Arkansas Union regiments were mustered out at about the same time, from June through August.
FOOTNOTES


3Ibid.


6Bertrand to Lincoln, December 12, 1864, O.R., Volume 41, pt. 4, p. 835.


8Ibid.

9Harrison to Dodge, December 22, 1864, O.R., Volume 41, pt. 4, p. 917.

10Thayer to Steele, December 17, 1864, O.R., Volume 41, pt. 4, pp. 876-877.

11Bearss, Fort Smith, p. 294.


13Reynolds to Halleck, January 14, 1865, O.R., Volume 48, pt. 1, p. 515. Reynolds believed that a garrison would be better placed on the Mississippi River, south of Helena, so that guerrillas could not pass into northeast Arkansas. What Reynolds might not have known was that over 7,000 rebels were in the northeast already.


18 Bussey to Levering, March 8, 1865, O.R., Volume 48, pt. 1, p. 1130.

19 Bearss, Fort Smith, p. 296.


23 A clue to Bussey's source might be gleaned from his letter to Harrison: "Let war be made on guerrillas and not on women and children." This phrase was a common plea made by guerrilla chieftains to Harrison and Sanborn throughout this period.


26 Ibid.


30 Ed O'Bradovich, Legends of the Game. O'Bradovich said that the Union army was a "high octane mixture of cussin' and fussin'..

32 Ibid.


CONCLUSION

Union occupation policy in Arkansas during the Civil War was shortsighted and unimaginative. Federal leadership never pursued a uniform, coherent plan in order to wrest the state from Confederate control. While Union leaders were often pursuing separate goals, the Unionists in Arkansas were often misled or left to fend for themselves after declaring loyalty to the Union. Because the Union high leadership did not follow a coherent program, they experienced difficulty in holding even fortified parts of the state, and the resulting loss of control over the countryside encouraged guerrilla operations. After losing control of most of the state, only vigorous campaigning regained the ground that was lost. Allocation of military resources to more important theaters of operations meant Arkansas would never receive the attention needed to pacify the state. Under the circumstances, it was amazing that local successes were gained by Federal leaders when they attempted to recruit Arkansans to the Union cause.

There were several levels of commitment that Unionists could choose from. The volunteer regiments reflected the highest level of commitment. The next level would be joining home guard units.
Finally, it was possible to take the loyalty oath and collaborate with Union military authorities when forces operated in a certain area. Many Arkansans merely went as far as the lowest level, so that Northern troops would not mistake them for Confederate sympathizers. The most dedicated Unionists joined the volunteer regiments, and they paid a high price for doing so. Most of these men were only sporadically paid, poorly supplied, and rarely trained. The leadership in these regiments was generally good, and this helped enlistment. But high expectations were placed on these men, and when they failed to produce results on the battlefield, Union authorities painted them as being cowardly and undedicated to the Union cause. However, their performance improved and when used within state borders and in a counter-guerrilla role, the Arkansas units had no Federal equals.

Recruitment of Arkansas volunteer regiments can be generally credited to Colonel LaRue Harrison and General Frederick Steele. Without the hard work and perseverance of these two men, the Union cause in Arkansas would have suffered greatly. Harrison was able to outlast all of his superiors in Missouri and Arkansas, and because of his deft handling of Arkansas troops and his ability to gauge the delicate political situation in northwest Arkansas, he was able to convert this area into a Union stronghold, threatened only occasionally by large armies or lack of supplies. The First Arkansas Union Cavalry Regiment was the first and only organization of its kind for over a
year, and the regiment set an example to be followed by others. General Steele can be credited with the capture of Little Rock, the most important event in Arkansas during the war. He also fostered Unionism wherever he encountered it, by organizing home guard units in the capital and encouraging the formation of a state government. Steele also funded Union pamphlets and propaganda, and sent raiding parties into southern Arkansas to pull out Unionist families. Granted, Steele’s failure at Camden may have cost Arkansas dearly, but the campaign represented an important attempt to seize larger areas of Arkansas.

Union policy was able to capitalize only minimally on Confederate depredations. Rebel recruiters forced neutral Arkansans to join their forces at various times during the war. The Southern armies in Arkansas were also hard-pressed to supply themselves, and they often took what they needed from civilians without paying for it. While Union leaders could not always use these outrages to their advantage, they generally knew well enough not to commit these depredations themselves. Of course, Union troops were usually better supplied than their rebel counterparts, and there was no need to pillage the neutral populace.

However, Union authorities did not grasp what had to be done in order to pacify the state. In reality, only half of the state could have been controlled by Federal troops, if the line were drawn at the Arkansas River. But even this goal was far from being attained, because of the small number of troops in the state and a result of political pressure from authorities in Memphis and New Orleans to
station all spare units on the line of the Mississippi River. A number of fresh units were needed in the western and northern parts of the state, but this is where units were deemed most expendable by the Union commanders. Generals Samuel Curtis and John Schofield fought over Arkansas in 1862, and General Joseph Blunt clashed with Steele over Fort Smith. In 1864, General William Rosecrans vied with Steele for control over northwest Arkansas, and finally, Generals John Thayer and Joseph Reynolds sparred over allocation of units in the state. These political battles absorbed most of these leaders' energies, and drew attention away from more important matters.

Arkansas Unionists had the desire but not the means to return to their homes as early as 1863. These men wished to take up residence at their old farms, and help supply the Union effort agriculturally. But the Federal authorities were slow in organizing these refugees and sending them back into the countryside with a system of defense. As a result, the Unionist refugees congregated at Springfield, St. Louis and Little Rock, unable to venture more than a few miles from safety of these garrisons. When smaller garrisons such as Batesville were evacuated, this caused much hardship for Union families. They all had to leave with the Union troops, or they would be left to fend for themselves against Confederate armies or even worse, guerrillas. What the Unionists were able to accomplish in the spring of 1865 is indicative of what they could have done at least a year earlier, or possibly as early as 1863. The shortsighted Union policies needlessly turned the conflict in Arkansas into a vicious guerrilla war, which ruined the state's resources and drove hundreds of people out of the
region never to return. Because loyalties had been divided during the war, reconstruction would prove to be even more difficult as disenchanted rebels and Unionists returned to their destroyed farms and villages in the summer of 1865.
Figure 1: Major Towns and Physical Features of Arkansas, 1861

1. Fayetteville
2. Fort Smith
3. Little Rock
4. Memphis
5. Batesville
6. Jacksonport
7. Helena
8. Pine Bluff
9. Camden
10. Clarksville
11. Lewisburg
12. DeValls Bluff
Figure 2: Union Troop Movements in Arkansas, 1862

Curtis, April to June, 1862: ■■  
Blunt and Schofield, November-December, 1862: ■■■■■  
Areas of continuing Union occupation, December, 1862: ■■■  
1. Fayetteville  
2. Batesville  
3. Jacksonport  
4. Helena  
5. Little Rock
Figure 3: Union Troop Movements in Arkansas, 1863

Cloud's Dardanelle campaign, October, 1863:  

Steele's Little Rock campaign, September, 1863:  

Areas of continued Union occupation, December, 1863:

1. Fayetteville
2. Batesville
3. Jacksonport
4. Helena
5. Little Rock
6. Fort Smith
7. Pine Bluff
8. Lewisburg
Figure 4: Union Troop Movements in Arkansas, 1864

Steele's Camden campaign, March-May, 1864:

Price and Shelby's Raid, August-November, 1864:

Areas of continued Union occupation, December, 1864:

1. Fayetteville
2. Batesville
3. Jacksonport
4. Helena
5. Little Rock
6. Fort Smith
7. Pine Bluff
8. Lewisburg
9. Camden
10. DeValls Bluff
11. Clarksville
Figure 5: Location of Union Colonies in Northwest Arkansas

During March, 1865

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<th>Colony</th>
<th>Strength</th>
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<tr>
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<td>3. War Eagle</td>
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<td>4. Huntsville</td>
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<td>16. Union Valley</td>
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Counties occupied by Home Guard units organized in Springfield, Missouri:

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